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The Racial and Sexual Identity Development of African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University

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The Racial and Sexual Identity Development of African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my loving and supportive parents Mr. Larry Hill and Mrs. Mary Hill and my brother O.J. Hill who without them I would not be where I am today. They have inspired me to be the best that I could be and never give up on my dreams and for that I thank them with all of the love I have in my heart.

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The Racial and Sexual Identity Development of African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University

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Using grounded theory, this study explored the racial and sexual identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University. Qualitative inquiry was used to capture the perspectives of the students using their own voices. A total of fifteen students participated in the study. Each participant but one was interviewed twice during the study. Each interview session was audiotaped, transcribed and then coded.

This dissertation presents the major themes of the study and a model that describes their racial and sexual identity development process and the intersection or race and sexual orientation. In the first interview 11 themes were developed during data analysis and nine themes emerged from the second interview session. The findings indicated that racial identity development did not tend to follow a general pattern development, whereas sexual identity development followed the general pattern according to sexual identity models. This study includes a model that depicts the

interaction of sexual identity and racial identity development for the participants. Overall implications of dual integration included the existence of a double lifestyle, the resistance to being labeled and isolated support systems. This study contributes to developmental literature and highlights the importance of conducting developmental research that includes multiple identities.

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CHAPTER I

Overview of the Study

Introduction and Background

" [you're] constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of [your]self and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self" (Lorde, 1984, p. 120)

Audre Lorde's (1984) work captures the challenge of being an African American gay, lesbian, and bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) individual. As members of marginalized communities African American GLBT people struggle to obtain a positive identity. It should be noted that the author includes transgender (T) individuals within the population, to remain consistent with previous literature. However, the research focus was on sexual orientation rather than gender identity, therefore transgender individuals were not included in the study.

While race/ethnicity and sexual orientation are distinct identities, it is the combination of dimensions that forms the whole identity. Faced with dual identities, African American GLBT individuals have to navigate through multiple layers of oppression to sustain a positive racial and sexual identity. According to Wall and Washington (1991),

> When an individual is both a person of color and a gay or lesbian person, that individual may feel that only one part of his or her identity can be important. For many, it is difficult to strike a balance that allows them to be empowered and liberated in both their oppressed identities (p.68).

Specifically, for African American GLBT college students, facing this challenge can be a daunting task provoking anxiety, stress, and isolation. This stress and isolation can place an individual at risk for negative health consequences, such as suicide, depression and low self-esteem (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni & Soto, 2002; Parks, Hughes, &

Matthews, 2004) Compacted by racism and sexism, homosexual and bisexual students of color are bombarded with messages of inferiority, that influence the psychological health of GLBT students. These environmental stressors cannot only impede healthy psychological functioning, but academic development as well (Roggow, 2003). Research indicates that students who are marginalized and not valued in social and intellectual matters, have problems with low self-worth (Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998).

In addition to low self-worth, depression, helplessness and anxiety, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students of color are also at risk for suicide and college attrition (Craig, 2002). According to the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, GLBT individuals comprise 30% of those who commit suicide every year (1993). Of that population, GLBT youth of color have higher rates of suicide than their White counterparts (Kulkin, Chauvin, & Percle, 2000). The attempted suicide rate for lesbians of color--27%--is significantly higher than that of the White lesbian rate of 16%. And the 40% rate for gay males of color is much higher than the already high 28% for White gay males (Tremblay, 1995).

While there is no research that specifically examines the attrition rates of gay students of color, research on student persistence in general has shown that students of color are at even higher risk of leaving school regardless of the type of institution, if they are not involved, valued and intellectually stimulated (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1987). Specifically, African American students have the lowest graduation rates, even when Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are factored into the equation (Lee, 1999). "Among all public four-year institutions, the freshman-to-sophomore attrition was highest at those institutions with open admissions policies and at historically black colleges

and universities" (McDaniel & Graham 2001, p.144). With African American students at a higher risk for attrition, African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students may face even more challenges that impede their matriculation through college.

Whether enrolled at a public or private, secular or religiously affiliated, predominantly White or historically Black institution, African American GLBT students may often be invisible. According to several studies that have researched campus environment, GLBT students encounter discrimination, harassment, and fear for their safety and personal belongings (Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001; D'Augelli, 1989; D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; McRee & Cooper, 1998; Nelson & Krieger, 1997; Walters & Hayes, 1998). Similarly, students of color encounter harassment, discrimination, and isolation on predominantly White campuses (Allen, 1992; Feagin 1992; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Lett & Wright, 2003). Regardless of the institution, college students in an oppressive environment are vulnerable for psychological and emotional risk.

While the call for college campuses to provide services for ethnic minorities and underrepresented groups is nothing new, it is only recently that colleges have been challenged to provide services for students who are not heterosexual. Within the last 20 years, institutions have made a concerted effort to provide support services for ethnic and sexual minorities. However, these services are rarely integrated. "To say that most [college and university]… offices only deal with one aspect of a person's identity is not a criticism; it is a reality. As a result, students often are forced to choose where to go on the basis of which part of their identity needs servicing or support" (Wall & Washington, 1991, p. 68). As colleges attempt to create inclusive programs that enhance student development, they have to be aware of the challenges facing marginalized students, and the

implications of multiple identity development. With the current student development models, colleges may be ill equipped in creating the most effective programs for positive identity development across multiple identities.

Identity Development

Erikson (1968), defined identity as "the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly" (p.42). Recent literature has illuminated the struggles that students face in developing their racial and sexual identity in the college environment (Al-Timimi, 2003; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). Identity development in college can be even more trying for those individuals faced with the challenge of developing as a gay person of color (Al-Timimi, 2003).

Identity models have been used to describe and understand the development of college students. According to Erikson (1968), college affords the traditional college-aged student a psychosocial moratorium, where the environment is a psychosocially safe place to experiment. College is an environment of programs, people, culture, policies and experiences that help shape and cultivate a student's identity, beliefs, values, and skills (Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005). For these reasons, college students are an ideal population to be examined as they journey through the identity development process.

While it is important to acknowledge the similarities between racial and sexual identity models, it should be noted these are two distinct models that may not adequately capture the experience of GLBT students of color. Wall and Washington (1991) stated that:

> "Although these models present a means for understanding identity development of either homosexual identity or ethnic-minority identity, they do not examine how an individual who is gay or lesbian and a member of an ethnic-minority group comes to terms with identity issues" (p. 68).

Both racial identity and sexual identity models have been conceptualized using developmental and social/cultural models. Similarly, they describe the process that begins with internalized negativity and stigmatized identities and progresses from a rejected self-image to embracing a positive identity without negating the dominant identity (Wall & Washington, 1991). Because of the absence of an identity model that encompasses racial and sexual identity, some understanding of an individual's identity is assumed due to the similarities of these models. This study is significant because it examines the development process of both racial and sexual identity and the implications of the dual integration. This research presents a developmental model that incorporates both dimensions and fills the gap in identity development research.

Statement of the Problem

Current understanding of identity development is based largely on theory and research that has looked at development from a single dimension. The reality that most people have multiple identities is rarely acknowledged or studied (Parks, Hughes & Matthews, 2004; Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2003). Both racial and sexual identity models have fallen short in describing the overall development of an individual and the implications of multiple identity integration. A preponderance of sexual identity literature have outlined the developmental task in the coming out process solely from the perspective of White middle class, males, thereby excluding the experiences of women and people of color (Greene, 1994a; Icard, 1989; Wall & Washington, 1991). Similarly, racial identity research has neglected to acknowledge other dimensions interrelated to identity development (Greene, 1994b). While there have been discussions on the impact of

race/ethnicity on the sexual identity process, there have yet to be discussions regarding the impact of sexual orientation and gender on racial identity development. The lack of exploration on the complex intersection of race and sexual orientation highlight the gap in developmental theory.

African American GLBT students are a prime example of individuals that embody the pursuit of developing multiple identities. Practitioners working with this population struggle to combine two separate models to explain the identity development process. As colleges prepare to provide opportunities and programs that facilitate the healthy development of their students, the current models may be inadequate to describe the developmental process of African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, leaving professionals with little concrete understanding of these individuals experience. This study was designed to help close the gap and provide practitioners the tools needed to be successful.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore how African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, at a religiously affiliated historically Black university, as they described their process of sexual identity and racial identity development. More importantly, the purpose was to investigate the combination of the two and the implications of this dual integration from the perspective of these African American GLB students. The researcher pursued three specific tasks: 1) examined the integration of race and sexual orientation as it relates to identity development 2) analyzed the implications of dual integration on identity development and 3) constructed a model that described the course of identity development of African American GLB students.

Research Questions

This study was guided by several research questions.

1) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development? Sexual identity development?

2) How do these processes interact?

3) What are the implications of dual identity integration?

Significance of the Study

The proposed study was significant for several reasons. This study provided an opportunity for African American GLB students to use their voices to shed light on the identity development process, and address the challenges in obtaining a positive racial and sexual identity. The study examined the identity development of African American GLB college students who have previously been excluded in racial identity, GLBT and student development literature. By constructing a model that encompassed the intersection of race and sexual orientation, the study contributes to the breadth of student development literature and can assist institutions in developing ways to address the needs of racial and sexual minorities (i.e. conducting orientation activities for African American GLB students, distributing literature to prospective African American students). Finally, this study was significant because it provided a platform to advocate change and enhance sensitivity among college administrators and the African American community.

Assumptions

The research study proceeded from four specific starting assumptions as outlined below:

First, college is a time for adjustment and change, affording students the rare opportunity for identity development to be the focal point of everyday life (Erikson, 1968). Navigating through the process of sexual identity development, however, can be trying regardless of sexual orientation or race. For GLBT students of color, this process can be even more difficult. The inability to formulate a positive identity can lead to unhealthy psychological functioning, risk-taking and potentially harmful behavior (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, & Soto, 2002).

Second, GLBT students of color seemingly confront more challenges and obstacles than their heterosexual student counterparts, and homosexual identity development for students of color is seemingly more complex compared to such development among their White homosexual counterparts. Faced with dual identities, GLBT students of color have to navigate through multiple layers of oppression to sustain both positive racial and sexual identities. According to Wall and Washington (1991), it is difficult for individuals who are both persons of color and gay or lesbian persons "to strike a balance that allows them to be empowered and liberated in both of their oppressed identities" (p.68). Confronted with both racism and sexism, homosexual and bisexual students of color are bombarded with messages of inferiority. These environmental stressors impede not only healthy psychological functioning, but academic development as well (Roggow, 2003).

Third, it is important to remember that the theoretical models of racial and sexual identity development are two distinct models that may not adequately capture the experiences of GLBT students of color. Previous literature illuminates the struggles that

students face in developing their racial and sexual identity during college (Al-Timimi, 2003; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). Both models begin with internalized negativity and stigmatized identities and progress from a rejected self-image to embracing a positive identity without negating the dominant identity. The models do not examine how an individual who is gay or lesbian and simultaneously a member of an ethnic minority group comes to terms with identity (Wall & Washington, 1991).

Fourth, the campus environment influences student identity development. The institutional culture, programs and support services alter development in some capacity. The researcher assumes that African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students attending a religiously affiliated HBCU describe developmental processes differently than African American GLB students attending a secular, predominantly White institution.

The last assumption also serves as a limitation of the study. The study was conducted by an African American heterosexual female. It was assumed, that as an African American female heterosexual researcher, the manner in which meaning and understanding is extracted was affected. The researcher's sexual orientation and gender had the potential to create a barrier between the participants and the researcher. The heterosexist bias of the researcher hindered the full understanding of issues related to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Definition of Terms

In this section the central concepts of the study are defined. They are: Sexual Identity Development, Homosexual, African American, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Racial Identity Development.

African American: For the purpose of the study, an African American is an individual that self-identifies their ethnicity as a Black American of African ancestry.

Bisexual: A person that is attracted to both men and women, or someone who engages in both heterosexual and homosexual activity (Al-Timimi, 2003)

Gay: Term used to describe homosexual men.

Historically Black College or University: According to the Secretary of Education, Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) are institutions that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving and educating the African-American community (Department of Education).

Homosexual: An individual that has thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that leads to an attraction to a person of the same sex. However, there should be a caveat with this definition, as some studies suggest that this term cannot be defined, rather "it is not a definable entity, but, rather, a normal variation of sexual behavior, erotic disposition, and sexual preference expressed in varying degrees and manners by different individuals" (Al-Timimi, 2003, p.5).

Lesbian: Term used to describe homosexual women.

Racial Identity Development: Quoting Helms, (1995) racial identity is a "sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p.181). For the purpose of this study, racial identity development is the process of becoming Black or African American (Cross, 1978, Helms, 1994).

Religiously Affiliated Institution: Educational institutions (i.e. colleges and universities) that are affiliated with or operated by a non-governmental, religious organization (Dovre, 2001; Shaefer, 2002).

Sexual Identity Development: This is known as the "coming out" process, where an individual has some sort of comfort self-identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual. According to Cass (1979), it is the process of personal introspection "by which a person comes first to consider and later to acquire the identity of 'homosexual' as a relevant aspect of self" (p. 219).

Summary

African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students are faced with many challenges as they attempt to form a positive identity as members of several marginalized communities. Due to the many challenges that African American GLBT people face, they often find it difficult to embrace both identities and may choose to ostracize one to escape marginalization in the other. In environments that isolate and ostracize this population, African American GLBT students are vulnerable to serious psychological effects (i.e. low-self esteem, depression, anxiety and worthlessness) that can impact the mental health of these individuals (From, 2000; Dube & Savin-Williams 1999). Research has indicated that gay, lesbian and bisexual people who experience pervasive and chronic oppressive acts may engage in behaviors associated with internalized oppression, such as making self-deprecating statements, failing to access needed social supports or placing themselves in situations that can be harmful (Harper et. al, 2004, Gonsiorek, 1993). In a study by Crawford, Allison, Zamboni and Soto, (2002) results indicated that African American gay and bisexual men who were able to achieve both a positive sexual and racial

identity, reported higher levels of psychosocial functioning and lower levels of distress. It is evident that the ability to achieve a positive integrated identity as an African American GLBT individual can reduce the effects of oppression and environmental stressors. However, the current racial and sexual identity models do not adequately describe the developmental process. As a result, new developmental models are needed that acknowledge multiple dimensions of identity.

From a developmental theoretical framework this study investigated the racial and sexual identity development process of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual college students. Using grounded theory, the researcher proposed a model that attempts to describe the intersection of race and sexuality on identity development and the implications of dual integration. The next chapter will review relevant literature that provides a background on identity development. In subsequent chapters the outline of the research design and results of the study are discussed. The final chapter provides an overview of the study and discusses implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The literature review has four objectives. The first objective is to provide foundational knowledge of identity development. Specifically, the literature review will discuss developmental theory and the impact of college on student development. The second objective is to provide an overview of racial identity and sexual identity models. Objective three of the literature review will draw attention to the factors that impact the identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. The last objective is to highlight empirical research that addresses the identity development of African American homosexual and bisexual individuals.

Identity Development

Most identity development models stem from the work of Erik Erikson, a pioneer in identity formation (Jones, 1997). According to Erikson (1968), identity is "the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly" (p.42). However, he cautioned against the misuse of the term, as he attempted to describe identity, not define it (Jones, 1997).

From a developmental framework, identity models fall under the paradigm of psychosocial theories. While these models differ in describing the type of identity, the number of stages within that identity, the origins of developmental growth, and structure, they all "describe the process of increasing differentiation in the sense of self and integration of that growing complexity into a coherent whole" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 23). Regardless of the dimension, most identity models share the fundamental principles of human development. According to Miller and Winston (1990), human

development (1) is continuous, with maturation following a certain course,(2) is cumulative, with each stage building upon the other, (3) progresses from simple to higher levels of complexity, (4) has an orderly progression (5) progress depends on the successful completion of developmental tasks in order for progress to be made. Developmental models also view conflict as the catalyst for developmental movement.

In addition to the aforementioned similarities, identity models have also been used to describe and understand the development of college students. Regardless of model typology, developmental identity models view experimentation, social interaction and conflict as necessary ingredients for maturation and growth, making college an optimal time for development. According to Erikson (1968), college affords the traditional college-aged student a psychosocial moratorium, where the environment is a psychosocially safe place to experiment. College is an environment of programs, people, culture, policies and experiences that help shape and cultivate a student's identity, beliefs, values, and skills (Pascerella &Terenzini, 2005). For these reasons, college students are an ideal population to be examined as they journey through the identity development process.

While these identity models help describe the development of college students, they do not come without criticism. Critics state that while developmental theorists acknowledge environmental influences on development, the influences are usually in a supportive role with a direct effect on development, overlooking the indirect or negative influence on development (Dannefer, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Critics have also stated that developmental theory of change is not neutral (Pascarella &Terenzini, 2005; Feldman, 1972). Regression is usually not addressed, restricting the movement between stages. "Evidence of change tends to be interpreted…,as movement toward a more

advanced stage of growth, even when the changes are not in the expected directions" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 50).

Another major criticism of developmental identity models is that a majority of models based on Erikson's work have been formed using samples of White middle-class heterosexual males, excluding women, people of color and GLBT individuals (Jones, 1997). These models make an assumption that developmental processes are similar regardless of individual idiosyncrasies (Pascerella & Terenzini, 1991). As a result these models tend to describe a single dimension of identity without encompassing multiple dimensions of race, ethnicity, social class, gender and sexual orientation. As the literature will highlight, most identity models fall short in providing a holistic picture of identity development by neglecting to acknowledge multiple dimensions of identity or by placing the theories within the context of culture and class (Jones, 1997).

Racial Identity Development

Racial identity is a critical element within the collective identity of an individual. In the past, race and ethnicity have been defined both from a biological perspective, and as a social construction; however, scholars have struggled with the constructs of race and ethnicity, because they are complex and difficult to frame. For the purpose of this study, racial and ethnic identity are defined from a sociological perspective. Quoting Helms, (1995) racial identity is a "sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p.181). While racial identity is often defined by physical attributes, it also has deep implications in how we are treated (Chávez, & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

Racial identity models were developed within the African American community

during the Civil Rights Movement. Similar to other identity models, they view development in a stage-like process with increased complexity and integration. Created to describe the range of "racial perspectives people traverse in their development toward a healthy racial identity" (O'Donnell, 2002, p. 1), these models regard race as a sociopolitical and cultural construction, with the underlying assumption that racial groups are either oppressors or the oppressed (Helms, 1995; Cross, 1978; Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). In the past 25 years, racial identity development literature has increased, focusing on models that describe the development processes of racial and ethnic identity for people of color. The next section will provide an overview of several models. These models were selected because of their notoriety within the literature and applicability to African American individuals.

Nigrescence, a concept formed during the late 1960's and 1970's, was the foundation of the earliest racial identity models. Nigrescence is defined as the process of becoming Black or African American (Cross, 1978; Helms, 1994). Nigrescence Racial Identity Development (NRID) models, attempted to separate those aspects of racial identity development that occurred as a response to racial oppression from aspects that occurred as a part of the self-actualization process (Helms, 1994). They also attempted to describe the direction of healthy racial identity development for African Americans, and defined over assimilation with White culture as psychologically unhealthy (Helms, 1994). The most notable Nigrescence Racial Identity (NRID) model was created by William E. Cross Jr. in 1971. Cross addressed psychological Nigrescence in a five stage model characterized by increasing complexity and differentiation. The five stages are Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization and Internalization-Commitment.

In the Preencounter stage, individuals idealize the dominant culture, and see the White race as superior to other racial groups (Cross, 1995). Generally individuals within this stage view race as unimportant and prefer to be viewed as human beings (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). At the extreme in this stage, anti-black African Americans view their community in the same way that White individuals with racist bias do (Cross, 1995). Overall individuals at this stage see Blackness in a negative light and condone the superiority of the dominant culture.

The Encounter stage involves an experience that proves as a catalyst for development. This encounter shatters an individual's current identity and worldview (Cross, 1995). Usually spurred by multiple events, this cumulative effect causes a state of disequilibrium. The individual is affronted by an encounter that forces them to explore a new identity. The encounter can be positive or negative, but serves as a catalyst for exploration and the emergence of a new identity (Cross, 1978; Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). At the end of this stage, "when a person absorbs enough information and receives enough social support to conclude that (1) the old identity seems inappropriate and (2) the proposed new identity is highly attractive, the person throws caution to the wind and begins a frantic, determined, extremely obsessive, motivated search for Black identity" leading to the Immersion-Emersion stage (Cross, 1978, p.85).

The third stage, Immersion- Emersion encompasses two stages in one. During Immersion, the person physically and psychologically withdraws into the African American community, discards the remnants of the old identity and commits to the new identity (Cross 1995; Cross, 1978). Emersion is defined by a shift from reactionary behaviors to racist aspects in the Immersion phase to an openness of critical analysis

(Cross, 1978). Emersion "highlights a progression out of a dualistic, reactionary mode into a more critical analysis of the new black identity" (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p.75). The individual is in more control over emotions as the individual transitions into the next phase.

Internalization, the fourth stage, is marked by resolution of the old identity and the new Black worldview (Cross, 1978). At this stage the individual internalizes a positive African American identity and gains a sense of self-confidence and security about their racial identity. Negative feelings of hostility and emotional turmoil tend to decline, making way for tranquility and flexibility.

The last stage, Internalization-Commitment, is defined by social activism and behaviors actualized from the thoughts in the Internalization stage. An individual becomes involved in social and political activities that confront institutional racism affecting all racial groups (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The individual is able to engage in and value other racial perspectives while embracing their own racial identity. At this stage the individual replaces an "I" perspective with a "we" perspective. Cross stated that development does not necessarily end with stage five, a person can stop at stage four without engaging in social and political activities (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Cross, 1978). According to Cross, the pinnacle of development arrives when a person is secure in their racial identity, and can also allow other people to be themselves and value who they are regardless of their racial identity.

In 1984, adapted from Cross' model, Janet Helms created the Minority Identity Development Model, using "statuses" versus stages to describe the developmental process. Similar to Cross, Helms' model increases in complexity and integration, and is

"characterized by successive differentiations of the ego" (Helms, 1994, p. 301). The statuses that develop later allow the person to cope with racial information about themselves and others (Helms , 1994). The five statuses are as follows: Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Introspection, and Integrative Awareness.

The major difference between Cross and Helms is that Helms argued that the term "statuses" encompass the interplay between cognitive and emotional development processes, whereas the term "stages" denotes a static position in which one arrives (1995). While Cross' model is a derivative of Nigrescence, Helms' construct of development is based on the Freudian principle, where "resolutions of the developmental issues of earlier… leave their imprint on subsequent stages" (Helms, 1995, p. 183-184). This implies that an individual can vacillate between statuses until one status becomes more dominant (Helms, 1995; O'Donnell, 2002).

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development is similar to Helms' in that it can be applied to all ethnic minorities. Phinney (1990) states that ethnic identity is crucial to a positive self-concept for minority adolescents. Phinney's model of ethnic identity formation examines "how individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement" (Phinney, 1990, p. 64). The model consists of three stages: Diffusion-Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Achievement. Individuals who can adequately navigate and resolve crises can develop a healthy identity. Those who become stagnant at one stage will develop a diffused or foreclosed identity.

During the first stage, Diffusion- Foreclosure, individuals have not explored their feelings regarding their own ethnic group. They may choose to ignore feelings or see

ethnicity as trivial. They internalize negative feelings that lead to foreclosure, self-deprecation, and a disinterest in their ethnicity (Evans, Forney &Guido-DiBrito,1998; Phinney,1990).

In the Moratorium stage, the individual gains a sense of ethnic identity issues. Propelled by an experience, he or she begins to explore the significance of their ethnic background. The individual begins to immerse him/herself in the culture and absorbs information about their history. This stage is marked by an awakening that leads to exploration of their ethnicity. "This stage is characterized by emotional intensity, including anger toward the dominant group and guilt or embarrassment about their own past lack of knowledge of racial and ethnic issues" (Evans, Forney &Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p.80).

In the final stage, Identity Achievement, the individual achieves a healthy identity as a result of resolving developmental conflicts. At this stage the person of color accepts membership into their ethnic group and becomes secure in their identity. Emotionally, this stage is marked with calmer feelings and increased self-esteem.

Cross, Helms, and Phinney have all described models that provide a structure for understanding how an individual negotiates their own culture within the context of other cultures. These psychological models attempt to explain the internal process of overcoming institutional and internalized racism in achieving a healthy racial identity.

Sexual Identity Development

Another important dimension of African American GLB development is one's "affirmation of one's sexual orientation" (McEwen, 2003, p. 213). "Sexual identity is historically and culturally specific, and the relationship of one's culture of origin to the

dominant culture can influence the development of one's sexuality" (McEwen, 2003, p, 213). This is evident in the struggles of African American homosexual and bisexual individuals. In the 1970's research shifted from the etiology of sexual orientation to the development of homosexual identity. Initiated by Cass, researchers began to examine how an individual acquires a homosexual identity and adjusts their life accordingly (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Sexual identity development is defined as the process in which an individual encounters an awareness and acceptance of sexual orientation (McEwen, 2003). During the 1970's researchers began to examine the complex process of "coming out" for gay men (Brady & Busse, 1994). "In these studies interview subjects were asked to recall the conditions or events they considered important to their acquisition of homosexual identity" (Brady & Busse, 1994, p.2). As a result of these studies, researchers have developed theoretical models to explain the acquisition of homosexual identity, some of which have been empirically tested (Brady et. al, 1994). Sexual identity models are loosely grouped into two categories; sociological and psychological (Levine & Evans, 1991). Sociological theories tend to focus on how individual's manage stigma and as well as the impact of social interactions on sexual identity development. Psychological theories focus on the individual's internal changes as they engage in the "coming out" process. These models study changes in self-awareness, decisions of identity management and homosexual self-image (McEwen, 2003). The next section will highlight both sociological and psychological models of sexual identity development that have been widely researched among scholars.

In 1994 D'Augelli formulated a lifespan model of GLB identity development that was based on a social constructionist view of sexuality (Houser, 2005). D'Augelli (1994) saw identity development as a complex process influenced by social interactions over time. He posited three sets of factors that influence the processes of identity development: personal subjectivities and actions, interactive intimacies, and sociohistorical connections (D'Augelli, 1994). Personal subjectivities and actions are the manner is which individuals react and interpret experiences emotionally and behaviorally. Interactive intimacies are social interactions that influence the interpretation and development of their sexual identity. Lastly, sociohistorical connections are the norms and values that exist within a society or culture at a particular time (Evans, 2000).

Avoiding stages, D'Augelli (1994) formulated six processes that occurred during identity formation. His processes are fluid and change according to the three sets of variables (i.e. personal subjectivities and actions, interactive intimacies, and sociohistorical connections). As a result, sexual identity can be fluid during some periods and solid at others (Evans, 2000). In the first process, exiting a heterosexual identity, the individual comes to an awareness of his/her feelings and of not being heterosexual. During this process he or she must give up the privileges of being heterosexual (Evans, 2000). During the second process, he or she must develop a personal lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity status, while they are exiting the heterosexual identity. Third the individual must develop a lesbian, gay, or bisexual social identity, within which they begin to build a social network of positive individuals. During the fourth process, he or she must come out to his or her parents by becoming a lesbian, gay or bisexual offspring. The fifth process is developing a lesbian, gay or bisexual intimacy, when one engages in their first intimate relationship.

Lastly, the individual determines the extent to which he or she becomes politically active by entering a lesbian, gay or bisexual community (Evans, 2000).

In contrast to D'Augelli's (1994) social constructionist model, Richard Troiden (1989) postulated a four- stage sexual identity model that is age-specific. Based on the assumption that the final stage represents true intimacy, each stage builds upon one another as the individual ages (Troiden, 1989). The first stage, Sensitization, usually occurs before puberty. The individual experiences same-sex desires and experiences, without conceptualizing them as an aspect of their self identity (Beaty, 1999). The second stage, Identity Confusion, occurs during adolescence and the teenage years. At this stage he or she recognizes that they may be gay or lesbian. The Identity Assumption stage, which occurs during late adolescence, is defined as the early process of identity acceptance, during which the individual usually comes out to his/herself (Beaty, 1999; Troiden, 1989). During the last stage, the Commitment stage he or she comes out to family and friends, true intimacy is reached, and there is an adoption of a homosexual lifestyle (Beaty, 1999, Troiden, 1989).

Although there are many models, literature does not support one theory over another. However, none of these models has been as researched as Vivienne Cass' Homosexual Identity Formation Model (1979). Similar to Troiden's model, Cass' sexual identity model has been conceptualized as stage theory. However, unlike Troiden's model, Cass' model is not age-specific. An individual does not have to go through every stage, and may regress to a previous stage at any time (Houser, 2005). The HIF model, based on Cass' clinical observation of homosexual clients, explains the change from a pre-homosexual to homosexual identity (Brady et. al, 1994). This stage oriented model is

based on the notion that homosexual identity acquisition is a result of the "interaction between the individual and his or her environment" (Roggow, 2003, p. 23).

Cass's (1979) stage model consists of six stages that progress from confusion to a synthesis of values from different perspectives. They are: 1) Identity Confusion, 2) Identity Comparison, 3) Identity Tolerance, 4) Identity Acceptance 5) Identity Pride, and 6) Identity Synthesis. During the first stage, Identity Confusion, the individual is confused about homosexual desires, thoughts and behaviors. The confusion may cause the individual to incorporate a negative self-image. During this stage, individuals often struggle with the conflict alone, seeking resolution (Houser, 2005). In the second stage, Identity Comparison, the individual begins to accept their homosexual identity, while still assimilating in a heterosexual environment (Cass, 1979; From, 2000). During Identity Tolerance, the individual identifies more readily with being homosexual than heterosexual. At this stage the individual begins to seek out members of the homosexual community, and the interactions with gay and lesbian individuals help the individual to handle identity conflicts (From, 2000).

In the fourth stage, Identity Acceptance, the individual has fully accepted, rather than tolerated, their homosexual identity. They have a more positive outlook on homosexuality and continue to engage in the gay and lesbian community (Houser, 2005). After acceptance, a sense of pride occurs during the fifth stage. With a stronger commitment to the homosexual community, they take pride in their identity and come out to others (From, 2000; Houser, 2005). During the sixth stage, Identity Synthesis, the individual completely accepts their identity and integrates it with other aspects of their life. At this stage he or she can interact with both homosexuals and heterosexuals comfortably.

This model is a broad overview of the progression from confusion to acceptance and integration that can occur for gay and lesbian individuals. While it is not linear, individuals can recycle through stages, or never complete them all, each stage includes a developmental conflict that needs to be resolved (Al-Timimi, 2003). According to Cass (1979), several courses of development can occur within one stage, including identity foreclosure. "Identity foreclosure occurs when the individual experiences cognitive conflict regarding their sexual orientation identity and cannot accommodate new information (feelings, behaviors, or cognitions) related to being gay", which inevitably leads to impeding sexual identity development (Marszalek, Cashwell, Dunn & Jones, 2004, p.105). If the individual chooses to address the conflict positively, and seeks out positive interactions, he or she progresses to the next stage. Conversely, the lack of positive social interactions and avoidance of conflict hinder the progression of identity development (Cass, 1979).

Brown (1989) stated that "biculturalism, with its requirements of juggling, balance, and living in and with ambiguity,... marginality, with its perspective that is both outside and within the mainstream; and… the ability to create boundaries that will work where none exist" (p.452) are the underlying elements of homosexual identity. These models have attempted to describe how an individual manages these essential elements. Each has provided a unique perspective on how a gay, lesbian or bisexual individual negotiates the overt and internalized homophobia to form a healthy sexual identity.

Limitations. Racial and sexual identity models are useful tools in conceptualizing the process of identity development. However, they both fall short in describing the full development of an individual. Racial identity models describe the racial identity process,

but they do not conceptualize the influence of gender and sexual orientation on identity development. Literature has not looked at how age, gender, sexual orientation or other important components of living intersect with racial identity. Instead, researchers tend to look at factors that act as a trigger for development without looking at the influence of other dimensions on racial identity development. While some individuals may progress linearly through the stages, others may embark in a cyclical fashion, passing through one stage only to revisit at a later time (From, 2000)

Similar to racial identity models sexual identity models look at the identity in isolation without encompassing other identities. Sexual identity models have been formulated from the White middle-class, well-educated male, perspective. Until recently, cultural diversity has been ignored in sexual identity literature. Communities of color and women have begun to question their identity process and whether it fits into the aforementioned models.

Audre Lorde best expressed the problem of these models. In *Zani* (1982), Lorde related the negative effects of fragmenting one's sense of identity by addressing issues of race within communities of color, issues of womanhood within female communities and issues of sexuality in gay, lesbian and bisexual communities (Eliason, 1996). These communities fail to acknowledge the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality as one's whole identity, thereby forcing GLBT of color to deny aspects of self.

Literature that examines the study of multiple dimensions of identity development remains relatively unexplored. To be inclusive and comprehensive, it is important for identity models to include the intersection of multiple dimensions. There is a need for more "fluid and comprehensive models of development that examine the interrelatedness of

various aspects of the individual identity and the role of the sociopolitical/historical context in which the individual negotiates her/his identity" (Eliason, 1996, p. 56). As individuals that encompass the intersection of multiple dimensions, African American GLBT students have to navigate through multiple layers of oppression to negotiate healthy identities. The next two sections will provide an overview of factors that affect identity development of African American GLBT individuals as well as review empirical literature that addresses identity issues for this population.

African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity Development

African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students embody individuals who develop multiple identities. While both racial and sexual identity development models provide insight into identity development, they do not examine how a person of color comes to terms with their sexual identity (Wall & Washington, 1991). George Herbert Mead (1934) argues that identity (the self) is formed out of the interaction between the "I" and the "me", where the "I" is our internalized sense of self and the "me" is our sense of self as we imagine how others might see us. "Through social interaction the self emerges as we move back and forth between the 'I' and the 'me' " (Rhoads, 1994, p.121). Culture frames the social interaction and is reshaped by that interaction (Rhoads, 1994). For African American GLBT individuals who face conflicting cultures, there is a constant struggle between "I" and "me". The self may struggle to emerge as the "me" is ostracized by the conflicting communities, where the gay identity is marginalized within the ethnic community and the racial identity is marginalized by the gay or lesbian community. This struggle is one of several factors that influence and hinder the development of African American GLBT individuals.

Within the limited research on African American gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals, certain themes repeatedly surface. This section discusses the issues of African American GLBT individuals that influence identity development and the interplay between racial and sexual identity.

Multiple Oppressions

African American GLBT individuals have to navigate through multiple layers of oppression to solidify their identity. They not only "contend with the negative societal reaction to the sexual orientation or gender nonconformity but also may experience racial prejudice, limited economic resources, and limited acceptance within their own cultural community" (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004, p.191). Combating racism, sexism, and homophobia, African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals not only face multiple layers of oppression but also conflicting sources of self-identification (McCready, 2004). According to Wall and Washington (1991), multiple oppressions affect their lives because:

> 1) They feel that they do not know who they are 2) they do not know which part of themselves is more important 3) they do not know how to deal with one part of themselves oppressing another part of themselves 4) they do not have anyone to talk to about the schism, the split in personality, they feel 5) they feel radical and, more often, misunderstood by each group if and when they say that both parts are of equal importance (p. 68).

While African American GLBT share the experience of homophobia and discrimination with their White counterparts, their membership in an inferior racial class tends to create negative multifaceted experiences. According to Harper, Jernewall, & Zea (2004), the interplay of the oppressed statuses related to gender, race/ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation give way to states of emotional and physical distress.

The marginalization within racial communities also proves to be a major source of oppression. As "some members of various ethnic/racial communities … feel that those people of color who join this movement (by identifying as LGB) are rejecting their culture of origin and joining the White oppressor" (Harper et. al, 2004, p. 188). Within the African American community, behaviors, thoughts and actions that do not fall within the narrow framework of "being Black" are designated as aligning with the "White" culture. As Icard (1986) suggests, within the Black community homosexuality is often associated with the dominant culture and is incongruent with cultural gender expectations. Thus, the racial identity of the African American GLBT individual is constantly in question, causing him or her to fight to prove how Black they are (Carpenter, 2002).

The marginalization from the African American community serves as a frightening and disheartening experience, considering that for African Americans, the community provides support and comfort from the racism and discrimination within society. "The black community serves important functions, assisting in developing coping techniques as well as helping the individual to develop and maintain a positive self-identity" (Icard, 1986, p.83). While African American families may teach their children how to negotiate racial and sexual barriers, they may, however, be unable to teach them how to cope with homophobia. Not unlike people with disabilities, homosexuals and bisexuals must go outside their familial system to develop a positive gay or lesbian identity (Greene, 2000). The alienation from familial support is much more costly when there is nowhere else to turn-and for many African American GLBT individuals that is often the reality they face.

Due to the homophobia in the African American community and the role of the Black family, the coming out process is even riskier for Black gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender individuals than for their White counterparts. In finding that African American GLBT individuals are inclined to identify more readily with the racial community than gay community, they tend to be wary about coming out to their family and friends (Cohen, Padilla, & Aravena, in press). Research has shown that when a member "comes out", family members are more likely to ignore, deny or hide the issue of the sexual orientation versus isolating the individual. In cases where the family is accepting and supportive, the individual support is often dependent upon the maintenance of an invisible social life (Romney, 2001; Bridges, Matthews, & Selvidge, 2003). Despite the homophobia within the African American community, African American GLBT individuals claim a strong attachment to their cultural heritage and often cite their racial identity as primary (Greene, 1994b).

The African American church serves as another form of oppression for African American GLBT individuals. Many gays and lesbians have left the church, feeling unsupported and condemned. Donna Payne, now a spokeswoman for the National Black Justice Coalition; left the Black church when she was young, "convinced that she could not be both Christian and gay" (Reeves, 2004,¶ 4). Payne lost touch with her African American church ties and felt forced to "go into a White gay culture to find peace and to know that God loves me" (Reeves, 2004,¶ 5). She, like many others, has been unsupported and often condemned in the Black church. The African American community, spurred by the teachings of the church, appears to be more opposed to gay rights than any other racial group in America. In fact, according to a survey conducted in 2003 by the Pew Research Center, a slightly higher percentage of African Americans (52 %) expressed an objectionable view of homosexuality, compared to 49% of Whites and 44% of Hispanics

(Reeves, 2004). With regard to religious denominations, White evangelical Christians and Black Protestants had the most unfavorable views toward gay men, 69% and 62% respectively, according to the Pew survey. "Not surprisingly, however, black clergy are being courted by both sides in the debate over gay marriage, especially by white evangelical Christians" (Reeves, 2004,¶ 9). Overall many Americans, regardless of race, still reject homosexuality and use religious beliefs as a major factor in shaping their attitudes. Once called the pillar of the African American community, the church is seen by African American gays as their main opponent and obstacle in the quest for societal acceptance.

In managing multiple forms of oppression, African American GLBT people seek a place of acceptance and sense of community. However, having been silenced and excluded within the African American community and the White GLBT community, this reality lends itself to the invisibility of an African American GLBT community. The lack of a visible African American community poses another form of oppression. The invisibility of this community is ironic due to the large African American gay and lesbian population, which is estimated to be 2 to 3 million (Boykin, 1998). Unlike the White lesbian and gay community, there are few viable institutions and organizations that serve to support African American GLBT individuals (Boykin, 1998). A statement by Keith Boykin aptly describes the sentiment of this invisible community,

> I know of no black gay neighborhoods, although every major city in America has a gay neighborhood or black neighborhood. Outside of the Internet, we have few consistent reliable mechanisms for distributing information and news about us. We own no bookstores, weekly newspapers, radio stations, or other media that affirms us. Our literature can be confined to a single bookshelf in a huge gay bookstore, and much of that literature does not affirm us a black same-gender-loving people. We have no holidays, months of observance, parades or other annual ceremonies or rituals. We have little or no sense of our history beyond James Baldwin, Audre

> Lorde and often mispronounced Bayard Rustin. Very few of us own community businesses, and even the bars and nightclubs we frequent are usually owned by whites. Unlike the rest of black community, we don't even have a black gay and lesbian soul food or music" (p. 2-3 Boykin, 1998).

While there has been some progress in building an African American GLBT community, it is still insignificant compared to the amount of support needed as individuals navigate through multiple layers of oppression.

Dual Identities

African American GLBT individuals struggle to form dual identities that are often in conflict with one another and larger society. Purvis (1994) stated that, "some in popular culture have suggested that to be a person of color and to be gay is a double blow predisposing the individual to a particular form of ostracism which increases and intensifies the psychological consequences…" (p. 77). The multidimensional marginalization of African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals poses the challenge of embracing both identities. Harper, Jernewall, and Zea (2004) stated that,

> This differential treatment in both the community of color and mainstream White LGBT community may lead some LGBT of color to conceal aspects of their various identities depending on the context of their interactions with others, thus experiencing varying degrees of visibility, and invisibility, within their own communities (p. 191).

As a result of marginalization, African American GLBT individuals may deny part of their identity and choose to "closet themselves and identify with their ethnic identity" (McCready, 2004, p.137). The denial of one's identity may cause serious psychological effects (i.e. low-self esteem, depression, anxiety and worthlessness) that can impact the mental health of these individuals (From, 2000; Dube & Savin-Williams 1999). Research has indicated that gay, lesbian and bisexual people who experience pervasive and chronic

oppressive acts may engage in behaviors associated with internalized oppression, such as making self-deprecating statements, failing to access needed social supports or placing themselves in situations that can be harmful (Harper et. al, 2004, Gonsiorek, 1993).

The ability to achieve a positive integrated identity as an African American GLBT individual can reduce the effects of oppression and environmental stressors. In a study by Crawford, Allison, Zamboni and Soto, (2002) results indicated that African American gay and bisexual men who were able to achieve both a positive sexual and racial identity, reported higher levels of psychosocial functioning and lower levels of distress. Although gay African American males deal with the dual oppression of racial discrimination and the homophobia within the African American community, there is an additional burden facing African American lesbian and bisexual women.

African American lesbian and bisexual women. Triple jeopardy, a term coined by Beverly Greene, defines the struggle that is unique to African American lesbian and bisexual women. As members of three marginalized communities, African American lesbian and bisexual women struggle to find belonging and acceptance as an African American, as a woman and as a member of the gay community (Wall & Washington, 1991). Within certain lesbian movements, some African American women have felt excluded in the fight for justice, and a lack of acceptance within the lesbian community (Louise, 1989). In the African American community, "lesbians in particular, often find acceptance difficult, because lesbianism is largely incompatible with female role expectations based on traditional African American values" (Wall & Washington, 1991, p. 288).

Succumbing to societal pressure, many African American lesbians engage in committed heterosexual relationships at some point in their lives. An early study by Bell and Weinberg, found that 47% of African American lesbians have been married at least once (1978). Ferguson (1995) found that 67% of the 181 African American lesbians surveyed, reported being in a committed relationship with a man during some point in time, and 39% reported having children (Ferguson, 1995). Adherence to traditional gender roles through heterosexual relationships "may allow them to perceive a sense of belonging and acceptance within their racial community, rather than being isolated because of their sexual orientation" (Ferguson, 1995, p. 288).

The maintenance of a heterosexual lifestyle provides a slightly higher status within the dominant and African American culture than being lesbian or bisexual. Greene (1997) summarized that African American lesbians "have been found to be more likely than white lesbians to maintain strong involvements with their families, to have children, and to depend to a greater extent on family members… for support" (p. 225). As a result, the cost of multiple oppression may lend itself to the decision to not come out. Affected by the sexism and racism within society of which she has no control, some African American lesbians and bisexuals may choose not to come out to obtain a sense of normalcy and regain some control (Greene, 1994a).

Developmentally, from adolescence to adulthood, African American lesbian and bisexual women attempt to negotiate the meaning of womanhood, sexuality, and ethnicity in communities marked with oppression and marginalization. Feelings of abnormality make them vulnerable to negative psychological outcomes, and may hinder strong identity development. As Audre Lorde (1984) explains, " it is healthiest for individuals to feel

simultaneously accepted in all the important aspects of their identity" (Loiacano, 1989). However, for this population it is often impossible to find a community that offers that type of acceptance, leaving African American lesbian and bisexual women isolated in their journey of identity development.

Gender Roles

The presence of pejorative sexual myths and stereotypes of both African American men and women contribute to gender and sexual identity development. Grounded in the historical contexts of slavery and segregation, the sexual objectification of African Americans and the pervasive stereotypes of African American male sexual prowess and sexual promiscuity have influenced gender roles and how they perceive their own sexuality (Greene, 1994b; Icard, 1986; Lociano, 1989). Mammy and Jezebel, the two major stereotypes derived from slavery continue to influence gender identity today (Speight, Thomas, & Witherspoon, 2004).

Mammy was seen as the unattractive, dark-skinned woman who served as the housekeeper, cook and caretaker in the master's house. She was seen as passive and loyal with the expectations that she put others needs before her own (Speight et. al, 2004). This stereotype has contributed to "African American women being perceived as nurturing, good caretakers, strong, supportive, and selfless…" (Speight et. al, 2004, p. 429).

The stereotype of the sexual promiscuous Jezebel, served as a means to rationalize the rape and exploitation of enslaved African and African American women. Jezebel was perceived as a hypersexual seductress unable to control her sexual desires (Greene, 1994a; Speight et. al, 2004). As a result of these stereotypes, African American women were often

viewed as promiscuous, loose, immoral, sexually aggressive, and lacking sexual restraint (Greene, 1994a; Greene, 1997; Speight et. al, 2004).

These two conflicting stereotypes have persevered, influencing how African American women are defined today. Different from their White counterparts African American women are viewed as dominant, aggressive, sexually promiscuous, rebellious, rude, while at the same time valued as strong, selfless, nurturing women that put others before themselves (Greene, 1994a; Greene, 1997; Speight et. al, 2004). These stereotypes and images are present today and highlight the cultural influences on gender roles and sexual identity development. □

For the most part, society stereotyped African American males as docile, deviant, sexually aggressive and negligent of family responsibilities (Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Moynihan, 1965). These stereotypes have created misperceptions of African American men that have influenced the definition of masculinity and gender roles. According to Lawson (1999),

> Scholars historically and more recently argue that African American men have been collectively emasculated because: (1) slavery caused a situation where many Black men could not protect themselves or their families; (2) a "matriarchal system" within Black communities, caused by an absent father or an "overpowering Black woman" emerge within the context of a patriarchal U.S. society that expects men to be the heads of households; and (3) economic oppression rendered Black men unable to provide for their families in a society where manhood and the provider role are inextricable.

The affects of emasculation continue to force African American men to create their own definitions of masculinity, and what it means to be male.

The historical, cultural, and social influences within the dominant society have shaped gender roles within the African American community. The conflicting messages within the community and dominant society can hinder a healthy gender identity and

sexual identity, especially when sexual identity and behavior violates cultural gender roles and values.

Homophobia and Heterosexism

Homophobia and heterosexism shape and define the experiences of all GLBT people, regardless of race, gender or social class. This section intends to provide an adequate background and definition of homophobia and heterosexism and the role of homophobia within the African American community.

Homophobia is the irrational fear, hatred, and intolerance of people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual (Craig 2002). Heterosexism is described as an "ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any form of …heterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community" that does not ascribe to heterosexual values (Herek, 1990 p.316). Together these two constructs are manifested in everyday life through behaviors, policies, and ideals. The interplay between homophobia and heterosexism creates oppressive barriers and environmental stressors that negatively affect self-identification and psychosocial functioning. In *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals on Campus* (1991), Kathy Obear, explains the three different ways homophobia and heterosexism are manifested: cultural, institutional, and the individual.

At the cultural level homophobia is manifested within a societal belief system that operates under the premise that rewards heterosexuality and perpetuates negative messages, discrimination, and harassment of gays, lesbians and bisexual individuals (Obear, 1991). The invisibility and exclusion of the homosexual community in defining cultural norms and values is a by-product of these two constructs, and thereby impacts family roles, gender identity, and definitions of "appropriate" sexual practices. The

cultural belief that heterosexuality is the only legitimate pattern of intimacy is reinforced every time people listen to the radio, read the newspaper, look at billboards, watch advertisements and go to the movies. Messages of "normal" love and family are displayed by heterosexual couples and nuclear families (Obear, 1991). These cultural beliefs, supported by laws and policies, create strict boundaries around traditional gender roles for men and women. To avoid persecution, harassment or discrimination, many gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals conform to societal pressure, thus never fulfilling their potential or living truly satisfying lives.

At the institutional level, the presence of homophobia and heterosexism have such power that "it is great enough to keep 10 to 20% of the population living in fear (if their sexual identity is hidden) or [feeling that their] lives are in danger (if their sexual identity is visible) or both" (Obear, 1991, p.41). Homosexuals and bisexuals experience the effects of institutional homophobia and heterosexism as they encounter governmental laws, policies, the legal system, the health care system and educational institutions. Institutional homophobia impacts every gay, lesbian and bisexual individual directly, through issues regarding marriage, gaining insurance benefits, buying a house, or starting a family. While media is a transmitter of cultural homophobia, it also manifests institutional homophobia. "Mainstream news rarely covers events and issues of importance to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities." For example, in 1987, the largest national news magazines failed to cover the March on Washington, despite the fact that it was one of the largest civil rights demonstrations to date (Obear, 1991, p. 43). When the media does portray issues surrounding the GLBT community, it is often cast in a negative fashion, perpetuating

stereotypes. As a result, institutional homophobia and heterosexism are promulgated throughout society.

The result of individual homophobia and heterosexism comes at a price of the safety of gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. They are the victims of hate crimes-often harassed, threatened, intimidated, physically assaulted, raped and even murdered (Obear, 1991). According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, which surveyed over 1700 self-identified gay or lesbian students, faculty members and administrators on 14 college campuses, the results indicated that more than one –third of the respondents said that they had experienced harassment of some kind within the past year, 20 % said they feared for their safety because of their gender identity or sexual orientation and 51 % said they sometimes concealed their sexual identity to avoid intimidation (Rankin, 2003). In addition to threats to personal safety, their belongings are often vandalized, stolen or desecrated. While cultural and institutional homophobia creates barriers and challenges, it is the manifestation of individual homophobia and heterosexism that poses the biggest danger to gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

Homophobia within the African American community. The manifestations of societal homophobia affect African Americans similarly to other individuals in the homosexual and bisexual communities. However, when compounded with the homophobia within the African American community, the challenges facing this population are even more complex. “The legacy of sexual racism plays a role in the response of many African Americans to a gay or lesbian family member, or a person in their community,” leading to extreme homophobia and rejection of gay and lesbian individuals (Greene, 1994a, p. 246).

Homophobia within the African American community is as pervasive as racism within the White community, and can be viewed as multiply determined (Greene, 1994a). The presence of Christian religiosity anchored within the African American church is a major source of homophobia. As the epicenter of the African American community, individuals seek guidance and strength from the leaders of the church. Traditionally church leaders (heterosexual men) have preached messages that homosexuality is sinful and immoral, using selective interpretations of Biblical scriptures to reinforce homophobic attitudes and intolerance. These messages contribute to the cultural, institutional and individual manifestations of homophobia.

Strict gender roles and views of sexuality can be seen as a determinant for homophobia (Rhoads, 1994). Some members view anyone who does not endorse traditional gender roles as weakening the African American community and violating traditional cultural values (Harper et. al, 2004). Jonathan Perry, a student at a historically Black institution, highlights the perception of masculinity within the Black community. "[Being a] Black man and gay are almost like two opposing points…many people think you can't be a black man and be gay" (quoted in Melby, 2004, p.1). Specifically for gay males, any behavior or lifestyle that contrasts with traditional masculine gender roles and sexuality is judged harshly within the community.

Views on the gay rights movement provide another source for intolerance of homosexuality. Many African Americans see the comparison between the gay rights movement and Civil Rights movement as an "erasure of their history as people who are still striving to get what they feel LGBTQ people already have—access to mainstream society" (Monroe, 2004, ¶ 10). However, a small minority, including the late Coretta Scott

King, a renowned Civil Rights activist, agree that gay rights is a civil rights issue and, for example, denounce any proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages. King said at a speech in April, "Homophobia is like racism and anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood" (King, 1998).

Another determinant underlying African American homophobia is the lack of understanding as it relates to the harmful nature of White supremacy that impacts the lives of everyone, regardless of sexual orientation (Monroe, 2004). Some view African American homosexuality as an ugly blemish that threatens Black empowerment and stands as an obstacle for advancement within White society (Asanti, 1998). Supporters of gay rights see that ostracizing one subgroup of the community causes tension that weakens the fight to combat racism and sexism together in America (Asanti, 1998).

While there has been limited empirical research on African American homophobia, some studies have examined the feelings of African American heterosexual men and women towards homosexuality. As a group, studies have found that many African Americans possess religious conservative beliefs that view homosexuality and same-sex sexual activities as sinful (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, & Soto, 2002; Greene, 1994b; Herek & Capitanio, 1995). A study by Lemelle and Battle (2004) examined the African American gender differences in attitudes of gay men. Utilizing data from the National Black Politics Study (1993), an analysis was run in order to investigate the influence of gender on homophobic attitudes. The results indicated that as women increase in age, income, and education, their attitudes towards gay males becomes favorable, which contradicts literature citing Black women as having more negativity towards gay males as

a result of a decreasing pool of "marriageable Black men" (Lemelle & Battle, 2004). Whereas age, income and education were statistically significant among African American women, they were not among African American men. The findings indicated that the level of acceptance or intolerance is constant.

Herek and Capitanio (1995) also examined Black heterosexual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. The data were collected in the course of a two-wave national telephone survey concerning AIDS related attitudes among adults in United States. The findings indicated that Black men hold somewhat more negative attitudes toward gay men than do Black women. The difference comes from males' tendency to see male homosexuality as unnatural (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). Similar to the previous study, Black heterosexuals were more likely to have positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians if they were educated, had higher incomes, were single, were registered to vote, and not religious (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). Three variables emerged as the most powerful predictor of favorable attitudes: believing that homosexuality is out of one's control, being single, and attending religious services infrequently or never (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). These findings are fairly consistent with past empirical research of African American attitudes on homosexuality (Alson, 1974; Ernst, Rupert, Nevels, & Lemeh, 1991).

Overall the intolerance of homosexuality within the African American community can impede the coming out process and lead to the detriment of healthy functioning. This can cause the individual to live a secret lifestyle and engage in risky behaviors such as drinking, drugs, or promiscuous sex---to avoid feelings rooted in internalized homophobia. Wickman (2004) summarized this sentiment by stating,

> For those that wish to engage in same sex relations tend to do so undercover – which may lead to unsafe sexual practices. This undercover or 'down low' lifestyle

> of especially gay black men has been coined the catalyst for the rise in HIV/AIDS within the black community and specifically for the rise in HIV/AIDS of African American women between 18-24… it is taking a heavy toll on blacks in this country." (p.13a).

While the effects of homophobia span further than the individual, it is the internalization of homophobia that can cause the greatest damage.

Internalized homophobia. Sexual racism and the intolerance of homosexuality fuel negative messages of the depravity and immorality of homosexuality that can become internalized and impede positive sexual identity development. According to Purvis (1994), internalized homophobia is detrimental on two levels. "First, the anti-homosexual messages are internalized and lead to self-loathing, repudiation of one's being, and all the attending psychological consequences of such an ego-dystonic state (p. 6). Secondly, "it is been found that internalized homophobia is at odds with the crucial task of identity consolidation during adolescent years" (Purvis, 1994, p. 6). As a result of internalized homophobia, many individuals choose to live a closeted lifestyle denying an important aspect of themselves, leading to self-hatred and a skewed self-identity.

Empirical Research on Dual Identity Development

Literature within the last three decades has focused heavily on sexual identity development of White gays and lesbians (Cass, 1990, Troiden, 1985; Wall & Evans, 1991). The majority of research that has included African American GLBT individuals has focused on the psychological functioning of this population. Despite the discussion of the potential problems of the coming out process for ethnic minorities, there have been few studies that have examined the dual-identity development of African Americans (Wall & Washington, 1991; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004). This section will highlight

empirical research that focuses on the intersection of race and sexual identity for African American GLBT, and the dual identity development of ethnic minorities.

In 1989, Loiacano conducted a qualitative study of African American gays and lesbians that examined the issues of gay identity development. This study laid the foreground for later dual identity research. Using an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, Loiacano interviewed 6 participants ranging in age from 25 to 51. Three themes arose from the interviews that related to dual identity development. The first theme, *Finding Validation in the Gay and Lesbian Community*, discussed the participants struggle with being accepted within the larger gay community and the pressure to fit the stereotypes of the White gay community. The second theme, *Finding Validation in the Black Community*, focused on a lack of acceptance in the African American community. Echoing other literature, the participants expressed the lack of support of their gay identity within the racial community. In the last theme, *The Need to Integrate Identities*, participants expressed the need to find simultaneous validation for both identities. This exploratory study brought to light the challenges of African American gay individuals and laid the groundwork for later research.

A study by Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, and Soto (2002), also looked at the interface of racial and sexual identity development. Specifically the study looked at the influence of dual-identity development on the psychosocial functioning of African American gay and bisexual men. The study consisted of 174 African American gay or bisexual men who completed questionnaires that assessed their levels of racial-ethnic and sexual identity development, self-esteem, social support, male gender role stress, HIV prevention self-efficacy, psychological distress, and life satisfaction. The results indicated

that African American gay or bisexual males who exhibited both positive racial-ethnic and sexual self-identification reported higher levels of self-esteem, HIV prevention self-efficacy, stronger support networks, and greater levels of life satisfaction (Crawford et. al, 2002).

A dissertation study by From (2000) researched the impact of ethnic identity and internalized homophobia on the sexual identity of African American men and women. Using three quantitative measures (i.e., Stage Allocation Measure, Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, Nungesser Homosexual Attitudes) 26 gay males and 24 lesbians were surveyed. The results indicated that internalized homophobia did not significantly contribute to identity development. However one finding did show that individuals with weaker ethnic identity and lower internalized homophobia reported a more positive gay identity (From, 2000). The findings of this study may support the theory that the individual denies part of their identity in order to maintain a sense of support and to survive in society.

While the aforementioned studies specifically examined the issues for African American GLBT individuals, several studies have compared the sexual identity development of various ethnicities. A study by Dube and Savin-Williams (1999), examined the sexual identity development among ethnic sexual minority male youths. Among the 130 sexual- minority male youths, they assessed the timing and sequencing of development milestones, disclosure of sexual identity to others and internalized homophobia. The results indicated that the participants, regardless of ethnicity, experienced identity milestones between the ages of 15-17 and had their first sexual experience in high school or college. Additionally, ethnicity was also not a significant

factor in internalized homophobia. However, there was a significant difference among ethnic groups in the timing and sequencing of certain milestones, and disclosure of sexual identity to family members. The results indicated that African American youth in the sample engaged in sex before labeling their sexual identity. "The avoidance or delay in identification suggests that African American youths experience a protracted period of questioning or denial of their same- sex attractions" (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999, p.1395). With regards to disclosure to family members, fewer than half of the ethnic minority youths reported disclosure, which may reflect the fear of rejection by family members (Dube et. al, 1999).

More recently, Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2004), conducted a comparison investigation of the coming out process of 145 GLB youths from different ethnicities. Using the Sexual Risk Behavior Assessment- Youth, Nungesser Homosexual Attitudes and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability scale, the researchers compared the sexual identity formation, current sexual orientation and social involvement in gay-related activities of the participants (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004). The results indicated that there were no significant differences in the sexual developmental milestones, sexual orientation, or sexual identity development. However, due to the lack of comfort with others knowing their sexual identity, African American youth disclosed their sexual identity to fewer people, and were involved with fewer gay-related activities compared to the other youths in the study (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004). This could be due to the amount of perceived risk in disclosing to family members and the racism within the GLBT community. Additional results indicated that African American youths had initially harbored more negative feelings toward homosexuality as compared to the other youths

(Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004). Overall, consistent with other studies, the findings indicated that cultural factors do not impede identity formation but may delay identity integration.

Different from previous studies, Parks, Hughes and Matthews (2004) explored the effects of race/ethnicity on sexual identity development in African American, Latina and White lesbians. Similar to other comparison studies, there were minimal differences in timing and identity milestones, but significant differences in disclosure. Lesbians of color were less likely than their White counterparts to disclose their identity to members outside of their family. However, with family members there was an age- related difference between the ethnic groups. Older women of color were more likely than younger women to be out to their families; the opposite held true for White women. Overall consistent with other comparison studies, the African American and Latina lesbians were more similar to each other than to White lesbians.

Summary

The literature review had four objectives, 1) provide foundational knowledge of identity development, 2) provide an overview of racial identity and sexual identity models, 3) highlight factors that impact the identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, 4) review empirical research that addresses the identity development of African American homosexual and bisexual individuals. The literature has highlighted African American GLBT individuals face several challenges that can impede and negatively influence their identity development. The developmental models that have been used to describe the processes of identity development may not adequately conceptualize the development of this population. There is a need for more comprehensive

identity development models that encompass multiple dimensions. Future research is needed to explore the ethnic differences and cultural factors that influence the identity process, and more specifically, the implications of dual integration on identity development.

The aforementioned studies show the importance of studying the interface of racial-ethnic and sexual identity, despite the mixed results. While these studies have focused either on youth in adolescence and older adults, few studies have explored the specific identity development of college students. College is a place of exploration and development and college students-whether heterosexual or homosexual- undergo "significant personal identity and interpersonal attitude development" (Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001, p.92). The lack of research on African American GLBT student identity development makes it difficult to address the problems these students face, and provides little opportunity for positive identity development. To provide more information about the integration of racial and sexual identity development and the implication of dual integration, this study examined the racial and sexual identity development of African American GLB students at a religiously affiliated HBCU. The next chapter will explain the research design and the goals of the study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology of the study. This chapter reintroduces the goals of the research and the research questions and describes the design of the study. The chapter includes a justification for the research, information about the sample, detailed description of data collection, and data analysis for the study. Interview questions and supplemental materials are provided in the appendices at the end of the study.

Research Justification

The literature on the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered population has been growing within the last decade. However, despite the increase, GLBT research has several gaps in the literature. Sexual identity development, and psychosocial functioning have been the major focal points in homosexual and bisexual research (Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001; D'Augelli, 1989; Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; McRee & Cooper, 1998; Nelson & Krieger, 1997; Walters & Hayes, 1998). While these studies have enriched the depth of understanding, the homogeneity among the participants limits the results. The majority of the studies researched gay, White males, excluding women and people of color. When research has examined GLBT individuals of color, it has been general research - grouping all ethnic minorities together without recognizing the diverse experiences among racial groups. Similarly the research on racial identity development has grown over the years. However, like sexual identity research, racial identity development literature fails to include factors, such as sexual orientation and gender that may influence racial identity

development. Racial identity development research has made numerous assumptions that the developmental process is similar for everyone. As the literature review has indicated, literature that examines the study of multiple dimensions of identity development has been relatively unexplored. These gaps suggest the need for more diversification in this area of research, including areas (i.e. women and people of color) that have been largely ignored in the past.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, at a religiously affiliated historically Black university, as they described the process of their sexual identity and their racial identity development. The study investigated the intersection of the two dimensions and the implications of this dual integration.

The study was guided by these research questions:

1) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development? Sexual identity development?

2) How do these processes interact?

3) What are the implications of dual identity integration?

Research Design

Rationale for qualitative inquiry

This study provided an opportunity for African American GLB students to use their voices to describe their identity development process and the challenges in obtaining a healthy racial and sexual identity. This study highlighted the experiences of individuals that have been largely excluded in literature. While quantitative studies shed light on some

of the issues that GLBT students encounter (i.e., sexual identity development, psychosocial functioning, and campus environment), they may not adequately provide meaning to the experiences of these individuals. In contrast, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to discover and understand the perspectives, behaviors and thought processes of individual participants. Qualitative research combines both critical and creative thinking to explore substantive areas where there is little information or provides a new understanding of well known areas (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that "…qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniability.' Words, especially [when] organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to the reader…-- than pages of summarized numbers" (p. 1). The qualities of qualitative inquiry made this type of research the most appropriate in capturing the experiences of African American GLB students.

Theoretical Paradigm

The limitations of racial identity and sexual identity models have created a need for a more fluid and comprehensive model describing the multiple identity development processes. Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) allowed the researcher to create a model derived from the perspectives of the students. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) grounded theory is a type of qualitative inquiry that develops a theory, "grounded from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process" (p.13). The researcher begins the research without a preconceived theory, but allows the theory to emerge from the data. Grounded theorists build rather than test theory using comparative analysis to arrange a series of concepts. These theories tend to "resemble reality… and are likely to offer insight and enhance understanding" of phenomena (Strauss & Corbin,

1998). Using grounded theory, the researcher analyzed the data to formulate a model that describes the intersection of racial and sexual identity development, and the implications of dual integration.

Sample Characteristics

The population for this study was African American gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered college students at religiously affiliated Historically Black colleges and universities. However, the campus culture, institutional size and institutional homophobia led many GLBT students to live closeted lifestyles. These factors made participant recruitment difficult. In general, the size of the GLBT population is relative to the size of the institution. Due to the transgendered population being significantly less than the GLB population, transgendered students would have been harder to recruit and would have been more identifiable within the study. For these reasons, transgendered students were not a part of the sample. The participants selected for this study were full-time, undergraduate college students who self-identified as African American and gay, lesbian or bisexual. Because several students led closeted lives, both openly gay and "closeted" students were participants in the study.

To obtain the most representative sample and broadest range of information, maximum variation sampling was utilized. Maximum variation sampling is a type of purposive sampling that elicits the documentation of diverse variations between participants and helps identify common themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maximum variation reduces the amount of key informant bias, which is a common limitation of qualitative studies. Due to the small sample size, the researcher could not be confident the participants' experiences were typical and therefore

representative of the group. In order to capture a variety of experiences, the researcher attempted to recruit participants from different socioeconomic statuses, classifications, majors, and ages.

The sample varied across these criteria. The sample included 11 females and 4 males in the study, ranging in age from 18-26. Three were classified as freshmen, 2 as sophomores, 6 as juniors and 4 as seniors. The majors of the participants included Business, Kinesiology, Music, Sociology, Biology, Criminal Justice and Education. One-third of the sample reported an upper-middle class background, one-third reported a middle class background, one-fifth reported a lower class background, and 2 respondents did not answer the question. A majority of the sample lived off campus (11), with only 4 students living in the residence halls. Of the 15 participants 4 identified as bisexual, 8 identified as lesbian, and 3 identified as a gay male. Overall the sample varied according to age, classification, gender and socioeconomic status despite the unequal distribution of gender and sexual orientation. Recruitment of gay and bisexual males posed a large challenge for this study. This could be attributed to the closeted culture of gay males and the extreme homophobia towards African American males in the African American community.

Sampling Methods

As with most qualitative studies, purposeful sampling methods were used to recruit study participants. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), purposeful sampling is a strategy where participants are deliberately selected in order to provide information that cannot be ascertained from other sources. Weiss (1994) defined study participants as a panel of "people who are uniquely able to be informative because they are an expert in an area or were privileged witnesses to an event" (p. 17). Past research has examined identity

development from questionnaires, or student surveys. However, to capture the most accurate account of the identity development process of African American GLB students, these students served as the primary sources of data collection.

Snowball Sampling. Purposeful sampling of participants took place through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is defined as a technique where individuals identify other individuals who can provide in-depth information for the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). It is useful for small populations, where selection criteria are not readily disclosed, such as sexual orientation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Small enrollment numbers, the sensitive nature of sexual orientation, and the lack of a GLBT student organization made the members of this population difficult to locate. These factors limited the use of other techniques and rendered snowball sampling as the optimal technique. Participant recruitment of other participants had the potential to compromise the diversity of the sample (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). To increase diversity within the sample, participants were asked to identify students who met selection criteria, but were different from them in various ways (i.e., major, classification, SES, gender).

In addition to snowball sampling, the researcher recruited participants in various ways. Through personal and professional relationships with faculty, staff and administrators the researcher was able to identify suitable students willing to participate in the study. Additionally, students were recruited by flyers (Appendix E) posted in designated areas on campus. The flyers advertised the study participation requirements, as well as confidentiality information detailing how their identities would be protected. This allowed individuals interested in the study to anonymously contact the researcher without fear of being "outed." Despite the limitations of these recruitment techniques and the

challenges of institutional and societal culture, the researcher made several attempts to acquire maximum variation of the sample.

Data Collection

Research Site

This study examined students at a four-year, historically Black, private, religiously affiliated liberal arts university. Set in a rural community, the institution is located in the Southeastern part of the United States. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools it has an approximate enrollment of 1100 students. Historically as well as currently, the university serves individuals who have been otherwise excluded from access to higher education. The institution primarily admits low- income, first-generation, and academically under-prepared students. The religious affiliation of the institution tends to draw students with strong spiritual backgrounds. Seventy-five percent of incoming students reported that they prescribed to a religious denomination. While the sexual identification of the student body is unknown, the researcher has witnessed a growing number of gay, lesbian and bisexual students on campus. It should be noted that the institution is referenced as SEBU in the interview transcripts to protect the anonymity of the university.

The research site was chosen due to the researcher's personal affiliation with the institution. As a former employee, the researcher had additional access to the students and was familiar with the setting and institutional culture. The researcher was employed at the research site for three years as a student affairs administrator in multiple capacities (i.e., Hall Director, Director of Counseling Services, and Coordinator of First Year Experience).

Each of these positions afforded her the opportunity to forge relationships and establish a strong rapport with a majority of the student body.

Institutional approval. After submission to the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board, the researcher met with the President and Dean of Students of the Historically Black institution to obtain institutional approval. The campus administrators were given a request for approval letter (Appendix D). This letter outlined the nature of the study, participation requirements and anonymity information, explaining how the institution and the students would be protected. In addition to the letter, the President requested a copy of the Institutional Review Board approval, before the study could be conducted.

Procedure

To gain an understanding of the students' identity developmental processes and their applied meanings, in-depth individual interviews were used to collect the data. Individual interviews, the most widely used method in qualitative research, allows for in-depth focus and understanding of individual experiences and complex processes. Interviews, "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984, p. 102), are based on the assumption that data are generated through social interaction (Mason, 1996). Individual interviews provide an opportunity to capture sensitive material in a one- on- one interaction, which best served the needs of the researcher. The interviews for this study consisted of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format. This allowed participants to explore their experiences openly within a structured framework, and allowed the researcher to probe for more information, while remaining focused on the interview questions.

Fifteen students were interviewed during the end of the 2005 fall semester and the first month of the 2006 spring semester. One participant could not be reached for the second interview; however their first interview transcript was included in the data analysis. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. The questions were divided over two sessions in order to prevent fatigue and to ensure that enough data were gathered to fully conceptualize the developmental process. The two interview sessions occurred at least a month apart to allow time for processing and reflection. The first interview included questions that explored the student's racial and sexual identity development and background before college, whereas the second interview included questions that explored the participant's racial and sexual identity developmental process since they enrolled in college. The second interview also included questions that examined the integration of their racial and sexual identities, and the challenges in developing a healthy racial and sexual identity. Further detail about the interview protocol and the list of questions are discussed in a later section.

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher and another typist not affiliated with the institution. At the initial contact, the researcher discussed the purpose of the study; informed the student of participation requirements, confidentiality and anonymity information and monetary compensation. Participants were made aware that while the information from the study would be shared, the participants and the institution would be disguised in order to protect their anonymity. The participants were informed that they could discontinue participation in the study at any time without penalty. To reduce participant attrition, participants were given a $15 gift certificate to a large chain superstore after the second interview. Initially the researcher proposed a gift certificate to

the campus bookstore; however, after the first interview, research participants informed the researcher that a gift certificate to the superstore would be more beneficial. Once the student agreed to participate, the time and place of the first interview was negotiated. The interviews were conducted at a quiet location convenient for both the student and researcher. Interview tapes and research documentation were secured in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. The data will be kept for three years after completion of the study and then shredded appropriately.

Interview Questions

Effective interview questions are open-end, clear and concise (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). To ensure that the questions were appropriate and specifically addressed the research questions guiding the study, they were sent to a panel of sexual orientation experts and a member on the dissertation committee (i.e., faculty members, researchers, members of the GLBT community) prior to conducting the interviews. In surveying the questions, the use of language was scrutinized to ensure that the questions were not offensive and matched the language of the population studied. According to Spradley (1979), "language is a tool for constructing reality" (p. 17). Researchers must not only be aware of the language of the participants, but also their own language. The language used in the questions had profound implications for the study (Spradley, 1979), and therefore the questions were carefully critiqued before data collection. For a full list of questions and the interview protocol, see Appendices A and B.

First interview. The goal of the first interview was to obtain background information, and build credibility and rapport between the researcher and participant. Before proceeding with the questions, students signed the informed consent form

(Appendix G) and were informed of campus and community resources in the event that psychological distress occurred during the interview or as a result of the study. While the researcher did have a background in counseling, to avoid complicating the research, the researcher would have made a referral. In the event that distress did occur during the interview, the researcher had developed a protocol with the campus Chaplain and the Director of Counseling, who are both experienced in advising GLBT students. After a discussion with the Chaplin, the research felt it was safe to utilize the counseling resources for the purpose of the study. In case of an emergency, the Director of Counseling would have been called first; followed by the Chaplin, in the event that she was not available. Telephone counseling would have been the first intervention, followed by an individual session on campus at a later date. In the event that telephone counseling was insufficient, the researcher would escort the participant to the first available counselor. While some of the interviews invoked heightened emotion, it should be noted that during the study, no referrals were made, nor was the researcher aware of any incidents of distress.

In addition to the informed consent, participants completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) at the beginning of the first interview. The questions asked during the first interview gathered information about their background and racial and sexual identity development before college. At the end of the interview, students were sent the transcripts of the first interview via e-mail or the transcripts were hand delivered for their review. Any questions or discrepancies in the transcript were discussed at the beginning of the second interview.

Second interview. The goal of the second interview was to obtain further information about their racial and sexual identity development since they enrolled in

college, and the challenges in forming a healthy identity. Questions also obtained information about the dual identity process and the implications of the intersection of these multiple identities. At the beginning of the second interview, a discussion about the transcript and interview process occurred to correct any discrepancies. Sentences that were hard to transcribe were discussed with the research participant for clarification. This ensured the accuracy of the data and helped build rapport between the researcher and student.

At the end of the second interview, participants were given the gift certificate and informed that the second interview transcript would be sent via e-mail or hand-delivered. Each student was contacted by telephone after two weeks to discuss any discrepancies or sections that were hard to understand in the audiotape.

Field notes. Field notes were taken during the interview sessions. Along with other topics, feelings about the interview dynamics and nonverbal cues such as body language and tone of voice were recorded in the field notes. The field notes were summarized in a systematic format, using a contact summary sheet (Appendix F) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Similar to the interview transcripts, the field notes were incorporated into the data analysis.

Validity

Validity asks the question, how do I know that my conclusions are accurate? Maxwell (1996) defines validity as the "…credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 87). Threats to the validity increase the odds that the results could be wrong, and validity strategies reduce the plausibility of alternative explanations (Maxwell, 1996). Quantitative and qualitative researchers impose

different strategies to address threats to validity. Quantitative researchers impose controls prior to conducting research that addresses anticipated and unanticipated threats, whereas qualitative researchers, due to the nature of qualitative research, address threats during data collection (Maxwell, 1996). "…[T]hey must try to rule out most validity threats after the research has begun, using evidence collected during the research itself to make these alternative hypotheses implausible" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 88).

Description, interpretation, and theory, three types of understanding, each have their own distinct threats to validity (Maxwell, 1996). The researcher incorporated strategies to reduce these threats to validity. Inaccurate and incomplete data are threats to description. In order to obtain complete and accurate data, the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. In addition to audio taping, the transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants after each session. Getting feedback from the informants occurred during data collection and data analysis. This was to ensure that the findings correctly reflected the ideas and experiences of the informants. This technique referred to by Lincoln and Guba as member checks (1985), "provides an opportunity to assess intentionality"-- that the participant intended to respond in that manner (p. 314). The researcher had discussions with the participants after each of interviews to discuss the interview process and the participants' transcription. These discussions allowed the participants to evaluate the overall accuracy of the transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Another strategy to maximize the accuracy of the data was to check for representativeness. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that researchers are information seekers and are more likely to "see" data that confirm their hypothesis than data that refute it. Therefore, the researcher had to be sure that the data were typical and collected from a

representative sample. The use of various types of sampling techniques was limited by the nature of the study, however maximum variation sampling was used to ensure the most representative sample possible. The researcher also looked for outliers as another safeguard to check the representativeness of the sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There were a couple of participants whose responses were different from the other students. These responses were used to test the generalizability of the findings and helped build a more comprehensive model.

Researcher personal bias can threaten the interpretation and the understanding of the experiences of the population studied. According to Maxwell, "there are several ways that this happens: not listening for the participants' meanings; not being aware of and bracketing your own framework and assumptions; asking leading, closed, or short-answer questions that don't give participants the opportunity to reveal their own perspective" (p. 90). Checking for researcher effects ensures that the researcher is aware of their own assumptions and biases. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that there are two possible sources of bias: (a) the effects of the researcher on the study (b) the effects of the study on the researcher. As a means of checking researcher effects, reflexive journaling was incorporated throughout the study. Reflexive journaling is a way for the researcher to be aware of biases, thoughts and ideas about the study and their impact on data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba, the journal could consist of three parts 1) the logistics of the study 2) a personal reflection 3) a methodological log regarding decisions or changes (p. 327). Personal reflection and logistics about the study were recorded during data collection and analysis, whereas

methodological entries were made twice when the researcher made changes to the interview questions, and interview process.

Finally, threats to theory, the last type of understanding, include not paying attention to alternative explanations for understanding the studied phenomena (Maxwell, 1985). Checking out rival explanations and looking for negative evidence are two techniques that reduce the threats to validity. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) by checking out rival explanations, the researcher is actively sustaining alternative explanations until they prove implausible, whereas looking for negative evidence, the researcher searches for data that refute their explanation.

Peer debriefing is a way the researcher can check out rival explanations and look for negative evidence. It can be difficult for the researcher to create alternative explanations when they have invested time and energy in creating just one (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, an objective peer, that served as the devil's advocate, was able to formulate rival explanations and locate negative evidence. For the purpose of this study, the researcher enlisted two colleagues that served as the peer debriefers. Both peers pushed the researcher to search deeper, and were able to provide different perspectives. One peer debriefer identified as a bisexual female, and the other debriefer identified as a lesbian. They both challenged the researcher on her heterosexist bias and provided alternative explanations during data analysis. Debriefing discussions occurred weekly throughout data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) summarized several methods to analyze data ranging from simple to complex. In qualitative inquiry, "analysis is the interplay between the

researcher and the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.13). Coding is the process used to handle large amounts of raw data. Coding procedures build rather than test theory and helped formulate the building blocks of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher coded each set of interviews separately to manage the quantity of data. The researcher identified sentences, and phrases that were relevant to the research study, and placed this phrase on an index card. The researcher then organized the index cards into discrete categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined this procedure as conceptual ordering. During this level of analysis, a pattern coding system was used to help the researcher identify emergent themes and explain patterns within the data. The new themes were then later analyzed into sub themes or categories. The larger concepts derived from both sets of interviews were constructed into a theme that explained the relationship between the concepts. This relationship served as the foundation of the developmental model created by the researcher. The major findings and themes are presented in Chapter 4, and the model and visual depiction of the developmental model are presented in Chapter 5.

To summarize, the raw data was descriptively coded onto index cards. From these cards, the data was conceptually ordered to search for emerging themes or larger categories. Once the data was coded several times, the researcher used comparative analysis to discover any connections and patterns between the themes and categories. Using a theoretical framework the researcher used the patterns to create a model and explain the developmental process for African American GLB students.

Role and Perspective of Researcher

The purpose of this section is to highlight the reflections of the researcher and the elements that factored into the research process. As the research instrument, my

relationship with the institution and the students influenced the nature of the data collection and analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that,

> Reflexivity is the term that recognizes the researcher as an inextricable part of the phenomena studied, and argue that "once we abandon the idea that the social character of research can be standardized out or avoided by becoming a 'fly on the wall' or a 'full participant,' the role of the researcher as active participant in the research process becomes clear. (p.18)

While employed at the institution, I formed relationships with homosexual and bisexual students in several ways. I was seen by homosexual and bisexual students as an ally and they recognized my office as a safe space. I was also served as the advisor of a gay/straight alliance that was being formed. However, due to a lack of student leadership and institutional barriers (i.e., lack of administrative support), the organization was never established. I created several workshops and forums that brought sexual orientation to the forefront as a diversity issue. These factors not only served as the motivation behind the research but also helped build rapport and established trust and credibility within the community. The personal relationship I had with some of the participants was a strength as well as a limitation. The students appeared comfortable to discuss both their racial and sexual identity development and were forthcoming with challenges and obstacles they faced. However, during the recruitment process, three students reported that some closeted students were afraid to participate in the study, because I had a personal relationship with the student. While this served as a limitation, I think that my relationship with the institution and the students, served as an overall positive element of the study that helped retrieve in- depth data.

As a heterosexual female researcher, the manner in which meaning and understanding is extracted from the data was affected. My sexual orientation and

heterosexist bias initially hindered the data analysis and posed a challenge during the first round of interviews. The reflection journal highlighted my bias towards the students as I categorized them from my past interactions with White GLBT individuals. I allowed Cass's model to indicate their stage in sexual identity development, without considering that this model may not be applicable for this sample. I noticed that with certain students I found myself questioning their experiences, and wondered why they did not do exhibit the same amount of pride (i.e. wear rainbows) as my White friends, and wondered why they did not fit into my preconceived ideas of GLBT individuals.

Throughout the interview process I watched myself change, as I met with my peer debriefers and engaged in reflexive journaling. I battled with several feelings during this journey as my prejudices surfaced. I was overcome with shame at the realization of my biases and discomfort with aspects of homosexuality. Despite reading books, attending GLBT events, and socializing with gay, bisexual and lesbian peers, I realized I still held a sense of discomfort. Last November, at a poetry reading, someone assumed I was a lesbian, and instead of embracing the assumption I became upset. Even though I regarded myself as an ally, that night it became apparent that I still had to overcome several prejudices. I engaged in some of the similar thoughts as my homophobic peers and felt guilt that I benefited from heterosexual privilege. After debriefing with my colleagues, I realized that my journey towards acceptance was far from over. These biases hindered how I conducted my study and the meanings I assigned to their experiences. As a result of self-reflection, feelings of self-doubt surfaced during the study. As a heterosexual researcher I questioned whether I was qualified to conduct this research.

However, despite my limitations this research is important for academia, society, and the, African American community. As each interview progressed I became more involved with the data and learned as much about myself as the participants. With all of the training, and books that have contributed to my introspective journey, this study has been the greatest catalyst for personal growth. Students, friends, and peers have pushed me beyond my comfort zone, and highlighted my hidden biases and misconceptions about race, gender and sexuality making me a better student, researcher, an ally. The next chapter presents the findings in two separate sections. The first section provides an overview of the themes that surfaced in the first interview and the second section provides an overview that surfaced in the second interview.

CHAPTER IV

Results, Analysis and Discussion

Chapter four provides an overview and discussion of the research findings. Guided by these research questions 1a) how do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development 1b) how do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their sexual identity development 2) how do these processes interact, and 3) what are the implications of dual identity integration, this study examined the racial and sexual identity development processes of African American gay, lesbian, and bisexual students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University?

The chapter includes a brief discussion of participants and interview observations, followed by the results and analysis of the study. Due to the magnitude of data, chapter four is divided into two sections. Each section discusses the themes in relationship with the research questions. The first section discusses the findings in interview one and how the themes relate to a specific research question. The second section discusses the findings in the second interview and how each theme relates to a specific research question. The themes were developed by coding participant responses. These codes were then placed into categories and subcategories that formed the themes presented in this section. Each theme is discussed in detail utilizing interview excerpts to demonstrate the theme and include the students' voices. At the end of each section, the researcher provides a summary of the findings that will form the building blocks of the identity development model discussed in chapter five.

Participants Overview and Observation

Ideally, the researcher would have individually described the participants; however the number of participants in the study made it too cumbersome to describe each in detail. Therefore the researcher provided a general description of the participants, which was given in chapter three. With each excerpt, the researcher included a pseudonym, sexual identification, gender and age to provide a clearer depiction of the student voice and perspective. While there were similarities shared among participants, each student came with different feelings, perspectives about their identity development process and had diverse experiences on campus. These variations and differences of opinion added depth to the results and richness to the study.

Observations

Reviewing the field notes after each interview, the researcher deduced that overall the participants enjoyed the study. While some were motivated by the financial compensation, a majority of the students were intrinsically motivated. This study allowed them the opportunity to tell their story and discuss the challenges they have had to face as a homosexual or bisexual student of color. It created an opportunity for introspective reflection and discussion. Some of the students discussed that they had never thought of their racial or sexual identity development before this study, or had given meaning to their experiences.

The researcher also noticed that during the interviews the participants at times seemed frustrated in answering some of the questions. This frustration was not due to the complexity of the questions, but in the difficulty of articulating their thoughts and feelings. Students provided more detailed answers when they discussed sexual identity related

issues. However, interview responses were short and less detailed when describing their racial identity development. The lack of detail in responses may be due to race of the researcher. Students may not have felt the need to provide detailed responses because of the commonality of racial identification. This often happens when participants assume the researcher has similar thoughts, values and experiences. It could also be due to the lack of awareness of the racial identity or where they are in their own identity process. Some of the students had never thought about race or their identity development until the interview, and could not readily provide an in-depth answer.

Participant responses were extremely detailed and candid during the sexual identity discussion. Students seemed to unload their frustrations, fears and joys during both interviews. Regardless of the nature of the relationship with the researcher, a majority of the students were at ease discussing their sexual identity, and did not feel inclined to teach the researcher about the intricacies of homosexuality or bisexuality. The students felt safe to disclose vulnerable information and were willing to share their experiences. Only one participant refused to explain his perspective as an African American gay male. He felt there was no need to explain, since the researcher will never understand.

> "There's no answer…you have to be, in order to understand. You can't make everybody understand you. There are ignorant people, people who don't care, people who want to try to care. Some people need to be understood…I could care less" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 303-305).

Despite their differences, the students in this study laughed, cried, and vented. Using their voices, they described their journey of identity development and the barriers to achieving a positive identity.

Categorizing the Data

Significant themes surfaced during data analysis from the students' descriptions of their racial and sexual identity development. Relevant phrases, words, or paragraphs were coded onto index cards. From these cards, the data were conceptually ordered to search for emerging themes or larger categories. Following the coding, the researcher used comparative analysis to discover connections and patterns between the themes and categories. From this process emerged several themes, categories and subcategories that are outlined in Table 1. As a reference to the reader, a table of the theme discussed precedes each section.

Section One: First Interview Results

In the first interview, the following 11 themes were developed during data analysis: 1) Diffusion; 2)Racial Identity Awareness; 3) Obstacles of Racial Identity Development; 4) Expressions of Race/Racial Identity; 5)Awareness of Same Sex Desires; 6) Identity Confusion; 7) Physical Experimentation; 8) Barriers Toward Acceptance; 9) Disclosure; 10) Resistance to Labeling; and 11) Dual Existence. Each theme, category, and subcategory is described in relation to a specific research question. Themes one through four demonstrate how the students' describe their racial identity process. Themes five through 10 demonstrate students' descriptions of their sexual identity process, whereas themes 11 and 12 highlight the implications of the dual identity integration. Tables 1 through 3 outline the organization of themes, categories and subcategories developed in the first interview.

TABLE 1: FIRST INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

1a) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development?

Theme One: Diffusion

Categories
Lack of racial exploration
Assimilation

Theme Two: Racial Identity Awareness

Categories
Realization of racial differences
Subcategories
School
Neighborhood
Factors that shaped racial identity
Subcategories
Racist incidents
Messages

Theme Three: Obstacles of Racial Identity

Categories
External
Internal

Theme Four: Expressions about Race/Racial Identity

Categories
Positive feelings
HBCU

TABLE 2: FIRST INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

1b) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their sexual identity development?

Theme Five: Awareness of Same Sex Desires

Categories
- Timing
- Catalyst
- Distractions

Theme Six: Identity Confusion

Categories
- Feelings
- Avoidance

Theme Seven: Physical Experimentation

Theme Eight: Barriers toward Acceptance

Categories
- Consequences of accepting a homosexual/bisexual identity
  - Subcategories
    - Labels
    - Judgment
- Attachment to heterosexual norms/values
- Homophobia (negative messages)
  - Subcategories
    - Family
    - Religion
- Internalized Homophobia

Theme Nine: Disclosure

Categories
- Coming out experiences
- Family
  - Subcategories
    - Lack of acceptance
    - Fear of rejection
    - Respect
- Expressions of coming out
  - Subcategories
    - Being out vs. Being open
    - Pride
    - Conservative vs. "Supergay"
    - Community involvement

TABLE 3: FIRST INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

3) What are the implications of dual identity integration?
Theme Ten: Resistance to Labeling
Theme Eleven: Dual Existence

Theme one: Diffusion

TABLE 4: THEME ONE AND CATEGORIES

Theme One: Diffusion
Categories
Lack of Racial Exploration
Assimilation

During the first interview, participants were asked to discuss racial awareness and exploration before coming to college. Of the three racial identity models discussed in the study, the first stage of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development most aptly describes the responses in Theme 1. During the Diffusion- Foreclosure stage, individuals "have not explored their feelings or attitudes regarding their own ethnicity. There may be a lack of interest in examining ethnic feelings or it may be seen as a nonissue…" (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p.80). For some students, before college race was seen as a physical descriptor, without assigned value to racial differences. Growing up, they were not affected by racial differences, but rather saw themselves as normal and equal to other individuals. Cross (1991) labels these views as indicative of low-salience attitudes in the Preencounter stage. "Persons with low salience views do not deny being Black, but this

physical fact is thought to play an insignificant role in their everyday lives" (Cross, 1991, p.190).

> "Race wasn't a[n] issue. Ok, it's just another person. I wasn't like "oh I'm Black, they're White, he's Hispanic"—it wasn't like that—it was just like there's another person who has light skin…you know…" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 50-53).

> "Race, I don't really think about it. I don't believe in race. Gauge me as tall or short…whatever. I am brown" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 14-15).

> "But like I said, it didn't have no effect on me. It didn't affect my life as far as getting further up in school and then learning that there was slavery" Jeff (Bisexual male, 20, lines 59-61).

> "I saw myself normal, just like everybody else. To me, I saw no difference because to me there is no difference. We are all people created by God—it's just other people judging. That's all they were doing, [as] I could see" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 159-61).

> "The school I went to, the first elementary I went to, were pretty much Blacks and Hispanics. We had few Whites there. And I don't remember looking at myself being different from anyone who was in the class… we were all equal" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 37-39).

> "Before I came to school it was just like, whatever, it's just a color" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 56-57).

> "Well in my family we're not really into Juneteenth and all that you know, celebrating the Black heritage. So I really didn't…[have any experiences] I guess I just thought it was a color cause we really didn't celebrate stuff like that" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 86-89).

Lack of Racial Exploration

In the initial stages of the preexisting identity, individuals do not engage in racial exploration (Cross, 1978). Brandy discussed opportunities for racial exploration, but found she was not interested in engaging in cultural events.

> "There were groups on campus—in high school like Mosia for the boys and then it was certain little groups that were emphasized on Black people but I never really was interested in it. I just didn't get down with it. It just wasn't anything that floated my boat" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 111-113).

For other students the lack of racial exploration or thought of racial identity was a result of their surroundings. For these students growing up in African American neighborhoods, churches, and attending predominantly African American schools created an environment where race was unimportant. As a result, some of these students never saw themselves as African American or thought about their racial identity until the interview.

> "I never had a situation where I just realized I'm Black…or I'm White, or… I'm supposed to be not as good as another race" (lines 56-57). Yeah—the few White people I met, they were in my surroundings so they had to fit in—they basically changed their selves to their surroundings (lines 98-99)" Nancy, (Lesbian, 22)

> "I never really just looked at myself as being Black. I know who I am, but I'm saying, I'm not gonna look at myself as different from anybody else" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 101-102).

> "[About racial identity] Let me think…it's kind of like…I never really looked at it this much until now. I have to think about it" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 133-134).

Assimilation

Several racial identity models also describe individuals at the initial stage of racial development as viewing themselves from a Eurocentric perspective without an awareness of their own ethnic identity (Cross, 1978;Helms, 1994). For some students, race was not a factor because of their level of assimilation within the dominant culture. These students had grown up in predominantly White neighborhoods and attended predominantly White schools. For them, assimilation was a part of life, a means for acceptance.

> "It didn't bother me that I had white friends or I dressed like white people…it doesn't bother me at all (lines 68-69). I think it was … because I've gone to all white schools. I mean, I had Black friends but it's like they would dress the same way too (lines 85-86) " Hanna (Lesbian, 22).

For Michelle, a biracial student, assimilation was a way for her to identify with her family.

> "So I wanted to be the same color my mother was, because that's all I saw. Black kids have black mommas and white kids have white mommas. And I wasn't

understanding why my momma's White and I wasn't. So..I used to try to put baby powder on my face and whiten it" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 75-79).

Overall a majority of the students represented described the beginning stages of their racial development, and as a result had difficulty answering the questions. The students did not anticipate how hard it was to define their racial identity or describe the process.

Theme Two: Racial Identity Awareness

TABLE 5: THEME TWO AND CATEGORIES

Theme Two: Racial Identity Awareness
Categories
Realization of racial differences
Subcategories
School
Neighborhood
Factors that shaped racial identity
Subcategories
Racist incidents
Messages

Theme two encompasses racial identity awareness. Students were asked when and how they became aware of their racial identity. According to Cross (1978), racial awareness is usually triggered by an encounter or an event, either positive or negative, that forces the individual to reevaluate their current view. " The encounter must work around, slip through, or even shatter the relevance of the person's current identity and world view, and provide some hint of the direction in which to point the person to be resocialized or transformed" (Cross, 1991, p. 199). Environmental transitions, racist incidents, and messages from family, friends, school and the media served as encounters that triggered

students' racial identity awareness. A combination of these experiences and encounters shaped and initiated their racial identity development.

Realization of Racial Differences

School. Students who started their educational career as the only student of color quickly became aware of race and racial differences. Evan and others describe their experience as being one of the few students of color in a predominantly White elementary school.

> "Well I went to a predominantly Caucasian elementary school so that was weird in itself considering that I didn't have any other people of my color other than my cousins and things of that sort but other than that…that was when I was first aware of knowing that I am African American… then that's when you get a sense of identifying yourself as a label and you begin to notice your surroundings as other people are Caucasian, Hispanic, Indian, etc…" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 17-25).

> "When I was little I thought I was White. When I was about six, I went to school with all White kids. And then I found out I was Black, it just didn't really phase me too much. But it then it became like, as I went to more schools, …I became the only Black person. Then I saw another Black person, and I got really excited. Somebody else is the same color as me" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 21-25).

> "Yeah I guess when I was the only Black kid in an all White class and look around and you're like --dang, there's nobody else my color" Hanna (Lesbian, 22, lines 63-64).

For other students the first realization of racial differences occurred as a result of environmental transitions. They described racial differences between Blacks and Whites as they changed schools. The transition from one school to the next brought to light physical as well as cultural differences, as they struggled to find a sense of belonging.

> "It was kinda weird considering I used to go to an [deleted] school and then we moved from 3rd ward to the northwest side of town and it's totally different…it's majority White people" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 55-57).

> "… I wondered why my hair wasn't like the other girls' at school, and well, your hair is thick and their [hair] is straight, and I'm like well, why can't mine be straight" Dorothy (Bisexual, female, 18, lines 39-42).

> "It was like one of them things where it was just like a question mark in my head to why I didn't, I fit in with them, but at home it was different" Dorothy (Bisexual, female, 18, lines 52-53).

> "Well, I grew up in a small town … so it's mainly white… Then we moved to [deleted] when I was in the 6th grade so that was a big change coming from up there and then moving to the hood. It was like ok now I'm around all these Black kids. I got suspended like 12 times my first year back. I guess it's because of the change. I guess that now I reflect on it, I guess it was a cultural change, a geographical change, and it was just a lot of educational differences that I underwent" Evan (Gay, 25, 43-49).

Neighborhood. One student described racial differences when they moved from into a predominantly African American neighborhood to a predominantly White neighborhood. Here she compares her experiences in the two neighborhoods.

> "Just from experience—To me, like in a Black neighborhood, you're more street-smart. I'm not saying that's good all the time, but you're aware of more situations that could happen. … whereas you're in a [White] neighborhood, you're a neighbor. In a Black neighborhood, you're classified. Either you're athlete, you steal drugs, or you're just somebody to hang out" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 35-42).

Carla, however, realized racial differences despite growing up in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

> "I mean I grew up in a Black neighborhood. Everyone was Black—there was a few Hispanics…maybe one White family where like the mom was married to a Black man but it was never just a completely White family in my neighborhood so I was always aware of the race factor" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 31-34).

Factors that Shaped Racial Identity

Other than environmental transitions, there were other factors that shaped the students' racial identity and created racial awareness. Some students described racist incidents that shocked them into the realization that they did not belong and defined their place in society, while others spoke of messages that helped define their racial identity.

Racist incidents. "Understanding the impact of race and racism on African Americans is essential to gaining an understanding of the development of the African American identity" (Burt, 1998, p.76). While racist incidents occur everywhere, the students describe racist incidents in secondary education. Despite the age of some during the time of the incident, each described feelings of powerlessness, anger, inferiority and betrayal. These feelings are common for people of color, as they encounter experiences intended to degrade and humiliate the individual (Moradi & Subich, 2003; Outlaw, 1993; Smedley, Myers & Harrell, 1993; Outlaw, 1993).

> "I can honestly say that I dealt with racism when I was in the 6th grade. That was the first time I ever dealt with that. I felt kind of bad. I never felt bad about being a Black person before it happened. But I felt … offended" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 110-112).

> "Oh my senior year, we have this group called the FFA and they were hicks and of course they didn't like Blacks. All through school we just knew that wasn't who we were supposed to associate with. Then one day one of them said "nigger" to somebody and "nigger lover" to the person who was dating her. She was Hispanic so it started a whole mess for like 2 weeks in school and it got so bad we couldn't talk in the hallway, you had to go straight to school, it was just fight after fight (lines 183-188)… I just felt like there's not much you can do cause they had the cops after us and the principal after us. And I felt like I'm going to graduate in two weeks so don't do something stupid. It just felt like you either put up or shut up" (lines 208-210) Tiffany (Lesbian, 20).

Messages. Messages received from the outside influence and shape how an individual defines themselves. Positive messages from family and school instilled a sense of racial pride and provided them with tools to deal with racism. According to Plummer (1996),

> "Parents of Black children typically prepare their children for the status of being Black in America. This process of racial socialization happens in early childhood and provides the child with a repertoire of skills necessary for growing up in a predominantly White culture (p.175).

Students discussed the familial messages that contributed to their racial development.

> "I always knew about other Black people because we celebrated Black history month when I was in elementary school. We would always talk about Martin Luther King [Jr.], Thurgood Marshall, Booker T. Washington, Carver…especially George Washington Carver —we'd always go to the Carver museum and learn about how he was the first man that discovered about the peanut. As a child, knowing about … being Black, that's how I learned… from the teachers teaching us about Black history" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 95-101).

> "Cause he's [my father] like basically, we all come from Africa—we're all Black. He thinks Black is beautiful, we're supposed to have big nose, big lips, big everything. You're not supposed to perm your hair and everything; you need to stay who you are" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 207-209).

> "My uncle was one of the main people…you a Black male, you need to stay in school, you need to go to school, do something with yourself. My grandma would always say "dress nice, keep yourself up, don't walk around looking like someone's throwed away child… so always keep yourself…you're already looked down at so keep yourself up" Jeff (Bisexual male, 20, lines 77-81).

While these messages shaped their development in a positive way, the negative messages from media and society shaped identity development and provided a realistic picture of societal stereotypes and expectations.

> "Well when I was in high school, I was in the co-op program and it was a job that we interview for. They discussed that, "this is the real world—you're an African American… when people look at you, when White people look at you, when White corporate people look at you, they're going to expect more of you. Even my White teachers preached that to me when I went to the other school so that gave me some vision as to what's out there in society—what they expect" Jeff (Gay, 25, lines 114-120).

> "If you look at society, most of the people on top, all the businesses…most of them is still White folks. It's getting better—a lot of Black people are starting their own business and stuff like that. But it was always harder—if you look at statistics, it was always harder for a Black person to get money or support. If a White person walks in and a Black man walks in, same situation, same background, I'm sure the White person has a better chance of getting a loan to start a business… and someone told me, or was it a study, that says it's even easier for a Chinese person to get a loan than a Black person" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 171-178).

Receiving mixed messages of who they are and who they should be, the student's identity is linked to the culture, history and experiences of the Black community, and is affected by

the racial constructs of a White dominated society. Juggling positive messages from family and negative messages from society, they struggle to form a positive racial identity.

Theme Three: Obstacles of Racial Identity

TABLE 6: THEME THREE AND CATEGORIES

Theme Three: Obstacles of Racial Identity
Categories
External
Internal

WEB Dubois was among the first to discuss the obstacles African Americans face to find a sense of acceptance and security. According to Dubois, "African Americans struggle with this sense of 'twoness' that is, wanting to feel a part of society while being made to feel apart from it. Until that conflict is resolved it is virtually impossible to take a stand on any issue that affects one's security or survival" (Thomas, 1970, p.78). This inability of societal acceptance creates an obstacle in forming a positive racial identity. Theme three discusses some of the factors students perceived as obstacles in forming a positive racial identity.

External

African Americans have been historically dealt with racist incidents that have negatively influenced their racial identity and psychosocial functioning (Burt, 1998). Racism and discrimination must be taken into account when analyzing the racial identity process. Racism, discrimination, judgment, and stereotypes were perceived as external obstacles toward their racial identity development.

Michelle and Brandy described the current types of oppression and the effect they will have on their future.

> "Like the reason why still in 2005 we're still oppressed in a lot of ways… and still have problems with race… even though it's hush-hush, it's still a big problem there" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 63-65).

> "I mean…I have things that are against me because of my race as far as you know…getting into schools…schools want me cause I'm Black…but then again, when I get there, they're gonna treat me the same way cause I'm Black" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 14-16).

Socially constructed stereotypes were another obstacle students perceived as hindering their development. Students expressed the importance of beating stereotypes in order to be happy and successful.

> "It means to be, basically I'm already put in a box, so I have to work harder. It gives me an initiative to work harder and do more as far as school and the career that I plan to have when I graduate… automatically you're stereotyped just because of your color" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 8-13).

> "Because when they see me, they gonna be like oh, gotta watch her. Go into a store, know what I'm saying, told me that when I was a kid. Go into a store, people gonna watch you more than they gonna watch the White person beside you" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 148-151).

> "I have to be successful. I refuse to follow the "stereotype" of people that I grew up with. Like if I'm gonna be in jail, I'm gonna be in jail before I'm 25. I don't want to be that. I want to be one of the ones who raised my people and then come back and give back" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 162-165).

Jeff and Evan provided the African American male perspective on the specific obstacles pertaining to Black men in America.

> "Well I see now that…I know that now I have to be on top of my game. Ya know, I have to get my grades right. It's the three strike rule. First you're a male, then you're a African American male, and then you're a gay Black male so you already have 3 strikes. So now that I've seen a little of what goes on in the world and in the corporate offices, it's like I'm getting there. I'm not there yet, but I'm learning" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 133-137).

> "Well they had more…like sometimes they will phrase it as "White power", like they have more opportunities than me as a Black male" Jeff (Bisexual male, 20, lines 65-67).

External obstacles such as prejudice and discrimination also create a commonality among African Americans that shape cultural values and practices. Every student identified struggle as a part of being African American. Perseverance through these struggles is what strengthens the bond in the African American community and defines their racial identity.

Internal

In addition to the aforementioned obstacles, dissension within the African American community was also seen as barrier to a positive self-image. Criticisms of the African American race frequently surfaced during data analysis. Students held negative sentiments about several aspects of the community. While constructive criticism of one's own racial group is not detrimental, the negative feelings underlying the criticism have the potential to foster anti-Black sentiments that hinder a positive self-image.

> "Blacks are labeled. So when you're already labeled as thugs, people who sell drugs, just hang out—just athletes, you know, a waste of talent, they stay there, they never want to do more. … It's this stereotype that they're actually making true because they're going by the stereotypes that have been put on them" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 100-107).

> "Everybody's kind of looking out for themselves, wanting to protect themselves. I think that's why there's a lot of Black on Black crime… I think that's wrong…Even though we've been labeled as something negative, that negative image does stand out when we do those things" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 23-28).

> "That makes me angry. And it makes me mad to see that my people are really doing this. Like I said,.. the Black on Black crime, racism…" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 67-69).

While a majority of the statements focused on the racial marginalization from the dominant culture, a few students expressed feelings of marginalization within their own group. Several of the students were ridiculed because they did not fit cultural expectations.

> "Before—I grew up on the north side with the upper-class White people, … I would talk like I was white because that's where I grew up. And when I got to the Black [side], it was like why do you talk like that? And I was like, this is how I talk. But they were like, no, you talk like you're White" Dorothy (Bisexual female, 18, lines 76-80).

> "I guess because I'm different from my brothers, like we all went to different schools, some things I did and the way I talked there, they called me White" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 133-135).

> "The way my brothers and I talk, was different. So I would feel like whenever I came back to visit, they would call me White girl or family members would say what happened, you've been brainwashed" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 64-66).

In an attempt to gain acceptance within their racial group, some students changed their speech and behavior to fit in.

> "I didn't conform to the way they talked, into the way they acted, I was always by myself. It was just like I was in a new world and I had to conform to whatever their style was—their culture. It just took some time to become different" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 64-67).

> "At first I was confused because I thought I was like everybody else. In middle school you want to be like everybody else—you want to fit in and…so I guess it bothered me at first and I tried to [change]…you know you try to find yourself and do things differently and…"oh I'm gonna talk like this"…but you know in the end you're just who you are" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 45-48).

Both history and experience influence the identity development of African Americans (Erikson, 1965). Instead of focusing on the negative influences of African American identity, Erikson (1968) sees the "negro identity as an adaptive coping technique in which African Americans have learned to protect themselves from potentially troublesome

circumstances" (Burt, 1998, p.40). These adaptive techniques help them combat external and internal obstacles in order to formulate a positive racial identity.

Theme Four: Expressions of Racial Identity

TABLE 7: THEME FOUR AND CATEGORIES

Theme Four: Expressions about Racial Identity
Categories
Positive Feelings
HBCU

Participants were asked to discuss what it meant for them to be African American. This theme summarizes the prominent expressions and meanings applied to their racial identity. It should be noted that the students did not differentiate meaning between high school and college. These expressions were based on current feelings and could be a direct indication of where they are in their developmental process.

Positive Feelings

Students exhibited assigned positive characteristics, such as perseverance, intelligence and creativity to their racial reference group. Every student expressed pride in being African American and valued the strength and accomplishment of the African American community.

> "As an African American, I would definitely say that we are a strong, strong race. And when I say strong, we have a lot of strengths in different things. We have strengths in politics, we have strengths in entertainment. We have strength in a lot of leaders like Rosa Parks" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 5-14).

> "To me basically black American means strength because throughout all of the struggles and misfortunes and discrimination they're still strong and it's still a

culture that is strong and has held together and hasn't let anything bring them down" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 24-26).

"Struggle, fight, overcome—talking about Civil Rights right now… They opened up opportunities for me. And [I am] proud" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 30-33).

"So it was always something stacked against you so you wouldn't succeed so I guess just a lot of pride…that you have to have a lot of pride as a Black American" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 70-71).

HBCU

While the first interview focused on racial development before college, some students expressed feelings of gratitude and appreciation for their current school. Several students commented that their institution encouraged and supported their racial identity process. The institution helped instill pride and heritage that had not been evident before. While racial identity development can progress at any speed, most developmental models define preexisting identities in early childhood and adolescence, with early adulthood as the milestone for identity transformation. This developmental process is evident in the perspectives of some of the participants.

"I got to college and then I really found myself … and found who I was and wanted to make a name for myself… I wanted to walk in the footsteps of my grandmother and my sister and my mother but I needed to find who I was first" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 102-106).

"I got to college [and] I really found out what it meant to really struggle and struggle on your own—not to have someone to necessarily fall back on when I needed them and that really helped me to figure out what it meant to be a Black American" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 109-112).

"It's a change coming to SEBU—it's made things a lot better…Since I went to a White [high] school,.. I'm just like "yeah I [finally] fit in" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 165-166, 175).

"I think going to a Black school is different…you actually get to learn where you come from and you see other Black people of different skin tone. It's not your family or whatever, and you actually get to learn, "ok, I came from here, these are

> the struggles people went through for me to be where I am today" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 62-65).

The participants were at ease with answering this question, and spoke with vigor and passion about what it meant to be African American. This is the one area of the interview that the students provided detailed answers and were forthcoming with their feelings. Despite the critical remarks, every student exhibited a sense of pride that was evident in their speech and nonverbal language.

Summary

Themes one through four relate to how the students described their racial identity development before coming to college. Aspects of Cross's model and Phinney's model were applicable for some of the participants. However neither model fit with the participants' description of their racial identity development during early childhood and adolescence. The students expressed positive feelings about their racial reference group, but also discussed obstacles that negatively influence the developmental process.

Themes Five, Six, Seven and Eight

The next four themes describe the participants' sexual identity process before college. Unlike the racial identity developmental processes, the student's sexual identity experiences follow a general pattern akin to a majority of coming out models. According to Levine and Evans (1991), there are four general developmental levels common to most sexual identity models: awareness, self-labeling, community involvement and disclosure, and identity integration. Participant's responses tended to fall in each of these four levels.

Theme Five: Awareness of Same Sex Desires

TABLE 8: THEME FIVE AND CATEGORIES

Theme Five: Awareness of Same Sex Desires
Categories
Timing
Catalyst
Distractions

Theme five conceptualized the students' experiences of their first realization of same sex desires. According to several research studies, most lesbians and gay adults felt different from their peers in childhood and noticed an increase of same sex attraction around puberty (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Savin- Williams, 1995; Troiden, 1989). The participants' responses were generally consistent with previous research on milestones within GLB development.

Timing

Students reported when they first became aware of same sex attraction. Regardless of gender or sexual orientation, a majority of students labeled their feelings in terms of educational milestones versus age. Most of the students realized their same sex attraction in high school or late middle school. Prior to their realization individuals were either in heterosexual relationships or did not think of sexuality at all.

> "I went to visit my cousin in Tennessee one summer—the summer before my freshman year in high school.… I was just sitting around one day and a girl walked in and I was like "oh, she's cute"….it just kinda came out" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 152-156).

> "I think it was about…as far as I remember high school. It may have been junior high, but it may have pondered my mind a little bit in junior high but I'll just go with high school" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 390-392).

> "I didn't really start liking guys or learn that I like this person, not because he was human, but because he was the same sex. I didn't really identify with that until I was in 6th grade" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 313-316).

There were two respondents who described their awareness in terms of age. The students were in early elementary school.

> "Five or six. [Looking at] little girls' booties. I was like I can't look at that booty, that's wrong" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, line 452).

> "Walking and talking. I always know. Goosing [physical interaction] little boys when I was growing up…probably in pre-K. I knew…I knew…I knew I wasn't right" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 394-395, 405).

Catalysts

Respondents also discussed triggers or incidents that prompted these same-sex desires. Often these incidents of revelation involved same sex physical interaction or were a result of close same sex friendships or interactions with teammates.

> "I want to say in middle school. It might have been earlier than that. But as kids, you play. And sometimes you would role-play because you want to play house. Well, in some cases, because I was always a tomboy, I was always picked as the dad, just because I had that—you know, my whole demeanor was controlling. And we would do little things. I mean, not, I don't want to say we had sexual encounters when we were young, but learning about your bodies" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 195-200).

> "She was a softball teammate. But most of my friends, my girlie girlie friends, we were just cool, but most of them were always the prettiest girls in school, I was always cool with the prettiest girls in school now that I think about it. I see them, and they give you a hug or whatever—play in my hair all kinds of stuff. I find myself when I look back I used to flirt, and they'll flirt back" Nancy (Lesbian, 22 lines 423-428).

Distractions

While this section includes quotes of realization of same sex feelings, some participants discussed factors that distracted them from realizing these desires. Sports,

school, and family issues were often distractions from thinking about sexuality and same-sex desires.

> "As for seeing them as pretty, I'd just be like it's ok they're pretty ok whatever. I'm not trying to touch them or do anything, it's fine. I'll just go play basketball or something to keep my mind off the fact" Nancy (Lesbian,22, 448-451).

> "I just knew I was attracted to males so I never really did anything. So it was like I was mixed in with everything else in my confused world with family and trying to get my goals together and figure out everything else after high school so that was put on the back burner. It was in the back of my mind. I never was worried about it" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 157-160).

According to several sexual identity models (Cass, 1979; Ponse, 1978 ; Troiden, 1989) these statements mark the beginning of sexual identity development. In most cases, the participants' gender atypical behaviors or feelings triggered feelings of being different. These initial feelings are usually followed by anxiety, confusion and internal scrutiny (Eliason, 1996).

Theme Six: Identity Confusion

TABLE 9: THEME SIX AND CATEGORIES

Theme Six: Identity Confusion
Categories
Feelings
Avoidance

Theme six is characterized by participants' expressions of anxiety and confusion over the awareness of feelings and societal reactions. According to Cass's (1979) model, to resolve confusion the possibility of a homosexual identity is either rejected or explored.

Feelings

Participants struggled with these feelings of confusion and religious values that homosexuality was wrong and sinful.

> "But when I started finding myself being attracted to females I was really confused—I didn't know what was wrong with me. My first thing was the Bible cause I grew up in a really religious home and it was like, this is wrong and God said this and God said that" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 180-183).

> "Umm, confused. Mainly because at the time I was talking to a guy that I thought I really liked, but there was a girl who I liked as well, and that I was on a level with to where I told her I loved her. So I was very confused because I was torn between those two people" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 246-251).

> "But you kiss a girl it'll feel different because it's supposed to be wrong, but it felt the same. Then I was really confused. Cause if this is supposed to be wrong, it's not supposed to be right, why should it feel different, better, or just the same. It's supposed to feel wrong" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 513-517).

> "My grandma one day brought out the Bible and started crying and then she made me cry cause I know it's not right but it's what I like and that's who I wanted to talk to" Hanna (Lesbian, 23, lines 284- 286).

Some students experienced feelings of fear or rejection from family members and friends.

> "I wanted to be accepted and I didn't want to lose any friends so I didn't tell them" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 312-313).

> "So I was very confused and scared because I didn't want my family to find out" Calista (Lesbian, 19, line 256).

> "But then I couldn't do it [be with a girl] because it wasn't common. People probably wouldn't talk to me" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 258-259).

For Tiffany, she was afraid of being different and not being normal.

> "Cause I knew that wasn't right. And I didn't want to be different so I was like let's be normal. You may not feel like that, maybe you just…maybe there's an explanation for it. But there wasn't so that was scary for me" Tiffany (Lesbian, 22, lines 491-493).

Avoidance

As a result of these feelings, and fears of being labeled as homosexual, several students described behaviors of avoidance. They rejected these feelings of same sex attraction by avoiding interaction with gays and lesbians or adopting a homophobic attitude.

> "They were like trying to, "oh yeah you wanna go on a date?" Naaaaa… and I'm sitting there like no, not really…I was like, no, I'm a girl, I'm not supposed to like girls" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 167-168, 175-176).

> "If I do have this attraction, it will never get that bad. I won't say it flourished over time but it still stayed in the back of my mind. It was never brought into existence. I didn't speak it into existence cause I didn't think about it. Don't get me wrong, it was there. It was a part of me but I didn't want it to be right now so I just pushed it back" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 197-201).

> "But then in middle school, when certain, friends began to, lots of time [say] oh, you're gay because you're a tomboy, you wear baggy jeans, then I really tried to change myself. I dressed more as a girl and, you know, skirts and things like that just so I wouldn't be classified" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 208-212).

> "It's weird because I got really homophobic I guess…which was weird. I just didn't want anybody to think I was, because I was talking to females. Before, I didn't care. I would go over to their house and go chill…whatever. But when I started talking to females that's when I…you get real paranoid…. I don't want anybody to know and if I talk to them then they're gonna think this and think that" Carla (Bisexual female, 19, lines 292-305).

For these participants initial feeling of confusion and fear led to rejection and homophobic behaviors. However for other students, their feelings of confusion were resolved through physical experimentation.

Theme Seven: Physical Experimentation

TABLE 10: THEME SEVEN AND CATEGORIES

Theme Seven: Physical Experimentation

During the interview, students described early physical encounters. The students used physical encounters as a means of testing their sexual identity. Questioning these same sex desires, individuals experimented with heterosexual and same gender sex.

> So I pawned it off like "this woman likes me" and all the other stuff and we had intercourse and so you know….we weren't together but you know. It was just weird but it didn't last that long because I didn't like it and I wasn't going to do anything that I didn't like. It was just weird. And I think I kind of regret it because of the simple fact that I always knew but it was like I needed to try it before I just chalk myself up to being this gay person" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 274-279).

> "I guess it's kind of one of those…I'm growing up, I gotta start making my own decisions and if I don't explore it, it's gonna be kind of one of those always in the back of my mind, always wondering what's it like so I just went ahead and did it" Hanna (Lesbian, 23, lines 503-505).

> "That was the night I lost my virginity. We never became a couple, we never had a relationship or anything like that, it was just something that I wanted to get off my chest, something that I wanted to happen for a long time" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 326-328).

For Tiffany physical experimentation was also a means to avoid her same sex attraction.

> "So I had a friend I'd known for a long time. I'd already told him I felt you know, I was just like this ain't nothing, just an experiment, get it over with. I didn't really like it. But as I was still 17, I was like I don't wanna be gay cause society says it's bad and I just don't know what to do" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 447-450).

Theme Eight: Barriers Toward Acceptance

TABLE 11: THEME EIGHT, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Eight: Barriers toward Acceptance
Categories
Consequences of accepting a homosexual/bisexual identity
Subcategories
Labels
Judgment
Attachment to Heterosexual Norms/Values
Homophobia (negative messages)
Subcategories
Family
Religion
Internalized Homophobia

Identity acceptance is the natural progression in sexual identity development. For some this is extremely difficult. Troiden (1989) suggested that positive homosexual experiences facilitate gay, lesbian and bisexual self-acceptance and negative experiences hinder identity acceptance (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Cultural factors such as value of family, religious values, homophobia, and discrimination lead to difficulties in identity integration for African American GLBT individuals (Greene, 1998; Lociano, 1989; Savin-Williams, 1996). Theme eight highlights the cultural factors that created the greatest challenge in identity integration. For several students accepting their homosexual or bisexual identity was extremely difficult, and for others they are still struggling to find acceptance. This was evident in their statements of tolerance and self-deprecating language.

> "And I guess that's probably why I won't and won't say it [Lesbian], because I haven't, [accepted as] oh, this is who I am" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 504-505)

> "Well, I struggle, I struggle to become who I am right now, like to form my identity. Like I said, back home I was in the closet, but when I came to college, I got out of the closet" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 179-187).

Consequences of Accepting a Homosexual/Bisexual Identity

Accepting a homosexual or bisexual identity does not come without consequences. The consequences of accepting a homosexual or bisexual identity or lifestyle was a prevalent theme that surfaced during the interviews. Discrimination, rejection, marginalization are elements that face gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals everyday. However, for GLB individuals of color, they not only "contend with the negative societal reaction to the sexual orientation or gender nonconformity but also may experience racial prejudice, limited economic resources, and limited acceptance within their own cultural community" (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004, p.191). Students expressed concerns about discrimination, stereotypes and labels that are applied to the GLB community.

> "So it's not completely free. You're free to do what you want but at the same time people judge you based on whatever reasons they have for disliking it or not accepting it or whatever" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 322-325).

> "It's like when people first see you, they're gonna have an opinion about you. They've already got how they feel that you are going to be. And as far as me being gay, they would have an opinion of how I would be" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 319-321).

> "I don't know, you're judged regardless… You would think that being bisexual, you would kind of fit in with both but you don't. A lot of times you're in the middle—and you kind of feel like the middle man trying to find himself" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 147-150).

Isabel discussed being labeled in high school because she played sports.

> "And one day she had asked me if I was, because she had a friend that went to school with me, and the girl told her I was. And I was like, no, I'm not…People classify the whole basketball team as being gay. So I played basketball and those were the girls I hung with, so I got categorized with them" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 236-240).

Attachment to Heterosexual Norms/Values

Another factor that hindered sexual identity acceptance is the attachment to heterosexual privileges and values. In the first process of D'Augelli's (1994) sexual identity model, exiting a heterosexual identity, an individual must give up the privileges of being heterosexual (Evans, 2000). For some of the students, a heterosexual lifestyle is a goal for the future. Several women and one bisexual male discussed future dreams of being involved in a traditional marriage and having children. They stated that this is an easier lifestyle, but it would make their family happy. Others saw same sex attraction as a phase and would eventually embark on a heterosexual lifestyle.

These statements came as a surprise to the researcher. The students described their same sex attraction and current life with passion, and in the same interview were determined to have a family and the American dream. It was interesting that these individuals did not entertain thoughts about a nontraditional family. This could be due to cultural factors, lack of exposure or where the students were in their sexual identity process.

> "I mean, not because that's mandatory of a female being with a guy, it's just I want kids and I want the wedding idea, it's just stuff that I want. But right now it's just, so far I can't see it right now" Dorothy (Bisexual, female, 18, lines 267-269).

> "Uh…well, I like females and that's, talking to females right now, but it's when I get married, I'm going to marry a man" Isabel (Lesbian, 22,lines 211-212).

> "In the future, further down…I would like to have a wife and kids. That is my goal, that is what I want…only time can tell, but that is actually my goal" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 273-276).

Homophobia

Negative messages from a homophobic society can hinder sexual identity acceptance. Participants discussed negative messages, from family and within church, growing up that influenced their feelings about homosexuality.

Family. Students talked about the messages they received growing up that homosexuality was wrong and sinful. These familial values gave a strong indication that their families would not be supportive of their sexual identity. As a result some students have hidden their sexual identity from their families and portray a different lifestyle at home than at school. This behavior is discussed in a later theme as an implication of dual integration.

> "She[older sister] was in college and she started telling me "you better not be gay"—she started just telling me that. I'm like "where is this coming from?" and she's like you playing basketball, you better not be gay and I was like I have a boyfriend, whatever. And that … would replay in my mind. Before that if I saw a girl that was pretty I'd be like she's pretty, whatever—nothing to it. After she started telling me that, if I saw a female and I thought she was pretty I'd be like what's wrong—you ain't supposed to do that" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 401-407).

> "Growing up…well my parents they already knew how I would walk and act and talk and all that, so that was real hard. This has been all my life and so…they've always been on me about that… about being gay, telling me that's not right and …. I'm like ok" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 350-352,354-355).

> "It's like negative words, they [family] talk about it…they don't like it" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 404-405).

> "She doesn't, she doesn't accept it. And she believes, just like the Bible, the Bible speaks on it, well, she says the Bible speaks on it, and she feels that it should be a man and a woman. If it's not, it's not right, you're going to Hell" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 490-493).

Michelle received messages from her mother's friends.

> "I would always hear them talk about, I found out what a faggot was, and I'd always hear them talk bad about faggots. Man, he ain't nothing but a faggot, talk bad about them… kind of like I guess, I always thought a faggot, gay, in a sense

> was a cuss word when I was growing up. So I didn't really tell anybody because I was like I'm not supposed to be this way" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 462-466).

Religion. For a majority of the students, the most negative messages and experiences were within the church. This is consistent with other extensive writings on the condemnation of homosexuality from the African American church (Reeves, 2004). Many African American gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals have felt unsupported and often condemned in the Black church.

> "Cause in our family, you know…the Bible says…it wasn't right, it's not common" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, line 192).

> "The religion thing…because you know, they say the Bible says you're not supposed to talk to girls… so with that I was like, ya know, that was really the only thing holding me back cause I could care less what people thought" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 218-219, 371-373).

Internalized Homophobia

These messages have become internalized and have caused some of these students to have their own negative feelings about homosexuality and contributed to the early rejection and denial of their feelings. Students described their sexual identity as an "unidentified flaw" or rationalized their feelings as a sin or a battle with the flesh that they are losing. Throughout the interview some students expressed feelings of shame or other self-deprecating statements about their same sex desires.

Overall these factors have contributed to their struggles or struggle of accepting their sexual identity.

> "You won't stop talking to me just because of that unidentified flaw but hey, everybody's different… I don't know why I would say that either. Like I say, I can't help it so I guess it's not a flaw, it's just different" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 471-472, 485-486).

Even though Greta does not feel shame anymore, she did express feeling ashamed before she came out.

> "And I don't have shame any more. I mean…because everybody knew about it, I wasn't ashamed about it anymore" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 26-28).

For these students accepting their homosexual or bisexual identity was extremely difficult, and for others they are still struggling to find acceptance. Bombarded with negative messages from family, church and society, some have internalized this negativity creating sentiments of tolerance versus acceptance.

Theme Nine: Disclosure

TABLE 12: THEME NINE, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Nine: Disclosure
Categories
Coming out experiences
Family
Subcategories
Lack of acceptance/rejection
Respect
Expressions of coming out
Subcategories
Being out vs. Being Open
Pride
Conservative vs. "Supergay"
Community involvement

This theme discussed their coming out experiences and factors related to coming out. According to a review of sexual identity research, most youth do not come out completely until they have left home and gain some type of independence. They reported that their families were the greatest challenge to coming out and did not feel safe to come

out until they were in a supportive environment (Evans et. al, 1998). Statements in the interviews echoed past research findings.

Coming Out Experiences

Tired of lying to family, friends and to themselves, most students first disclosed to their friends at the end of high school or during college. Overwhelmed with fear, hesitation and confusion, the students openly discussed their coming out experience.

> "So it was like when I did tell some of them, they were like oh, I knew. And it made it easier, it made it easier, but then I wish I would have told them earlier, just because I felt like I was always hiding something from my friends" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 340-341)

> "I just got tired, like I said, I just got tired of hiding, hiding, hiding. I'd been hiding for so long….I was just tired of just being in the closet. I said, I'm ready to just be out" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 374-378).

> "This was a year before [high school] graduation. She already knew, just like my parents. She already knew, I told her I have to tell you something. I literally went to her with tears in my eyes cause I wasn't sure how she was going to react, if she would still be my best friend. I was like I gotta tell you something, then she just bursted out you gay? I was like how did you know?" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 362-366).

> "So I was just picking up on stuff, but I remember when I was 17 and I had a best friend and on her birthday, … I told her, I was like, … I think I'm gay". And she was like no you're not, you talk to guys. I was like, yeah, I know, but there's something truly wrong with that" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 436-439).

> "It wasn't until college. It was February of 2001. I told my best friend. That was the night [after] I had my first sexual experience with another male" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 218-219).

Some students stated that they felt more comfortable disclosing to other gay, lesbian or bisexual peers that were already out.

> "Ninth grade…My friend, yeah. One of the girls that was doing it too" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 308, 312).
>
> "[In 9th grade] One of my friends that I'd grown up with, people said that she was lesbian too. We were going to the movies and we began, just talking, and

somehow we got on the conversation of who we were involved with" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 262-265).

While a majority of students initially disclosed to close friends, a few students told their family members first.

> "My sister … telling her was hard, but her accepting it was like the shock because I didn't think she was gonna be so…cool" Dorothy (Bisexual, 18, lines 272, 278-279).

> "And she [mom] was like, I been knowing. I was like, you have? And she was like, I just wanted you to tell me. She was like, why didn't you tell me? I was like, I was scared. I remember asking her when I was a kid, momma, what if I, decide to date girls? Like what if I decide to be gay, how would you feel? And she was like, you'll still be my daughter, I'll still love you the same" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, 521-525).

Family

Issues with their family were seen as reasons why they have remained closeted when they are at home or disclosed later in college.

Lack of acceptance/rejection. A majority of the students hid their identity out of fear of rejection. They felt that their family, specifically their mother and grandmother, would not accept their sexual identity.

> "As far as like…my family doesn't really know. My aunt knows cause she's a lesbian but it was at the point where my mom somewhat knew but I could tell it bothered her. And she had told me ya know, if you're like that you're not going to do this and this and you're not gonna come in my house. It hurt cause it's like dang, this is my mom….and not saying she's supposed to accept it but I wish she would accept it and I guess that's why I haven't told her. So…it's that and as far as my grandparents, [I haven't] let them know cause it's going to hurt them" Hanna (Lesbian, 22, lines 213-219).

> "And I love my grandma. I don't want my grandma to ever think anything bad about me. She's happy I'm going to college, she's happy I'm doing good things" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 413-415).

> "They still don't know… Yeah I don't want to be telling nothing and then it falls apart and then like [why take the risk]" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 289, 301-302).

> "It was the simple fact that I've seen so many people's families push them away. I didn't want my family pushing me away because of my sexual lifestyle. So I'd rather hide it than lose my family" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 397-400).

Respect. An interesting aspect that surfaced during the interviews was the amount of respect the students expressed for their family. This collectivistic paradigm forced them to change their behaviors in public or around their family to avoid being disrespectful. As their first priority, they did not want to jeopardize familial approval and acceptance.

> "Basically what they told me, and what I learned from them, was you can do whatever you want to do in life as far as goals, sexuality, whatever, but you have to, really be discreet and respect yourself first, respect your family…. To me family is everything, family comes first. I put my family before myself. And if they were to push me away, I really don't know where I would be or what I would be doing, honestly." Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 365-367,443-446).

> "It's like I'm grown now so I want to respect them, but you don't want to disrespect them by going all out and just acting real gay" Jeff (Bisexual, male,20 lines 357-359).

> "Sometimes I gotta kinda watch out cause a lot of people know me in Austin and know my mom so it's kinda like I have to…if I see somebody, oh, they know me, they know my mom… ya know just kinda watch how I act" Hanna (Lesbian, 22, lines 563-566).

Expressions of Coming Out

Being open vs. being out. The other element of disclosure was students' expressions of coming out. A dominant message that surfaced during the interviews was the importance of being open with yourself and others. They labeled this process as the "being open" process. There was greater importance placed on being open and honest with one's self than being out to others. While their expressions of disclosure fit within the general sexual identity development process, the labeling of their process deviated from prior literature and sexual identity models (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989).

> "Cause open is [better] cause you're being more open-minded I guess to show who you are or your feelings for someone else. So I think that open is a better word to call it" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 578-580).

> "I think there's a sense of being open. I'm honest with myself and honest with the people around me. Because I can always sit there and have feelings for a woman and just be hush-hush about it and continue to date guys or whatever, and just never be honest with myself. It's like I'm a truthful person, so it's like I want to be honest in everything I do" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 299-303).

Henry expressed being out as a state of mind that encompasses your entire being.

> "I can add though that being out is a state of mind. And when I say that I mean that you kind of breathe being out. Everything you do is pertaining to being out. Everything you say, it pertains to you being out, from your clothes to your toenails to your fingernails to your eyebrows to your hairstyle" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 492-495).

Pride. The more open the students were with themselves the more prideful they became about their sexual identity.

> "That's what being a Black gay male means to me is knowing who you are, and not only that but standing strong in that and not be worried about what everybody else" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 306-308).

> "I'm proud. Yes, I'm proud. I attend events. I'm very proud. I mean, because that's who I am" Greta (Lesbian, 25, lines 192-193).

Different from other students, Tiffany publicly showed her pride with a display of gay symbols.

> "Well I do have a lot of I guess symbols. I have a keychain…I have a lei in my car" Tiffany (Lesbian, 23, line 712).

Conservative vs. "supergay". Unlike Tiffany, several students did not feel the need to outwardly express their sexuality with gay pride symbols. Several students described themselves as conservative and only disclosed their sexual identity when asked. These students viewed gay pride symbols as unnecessary and labeled individuals with gay pride paraphernalia as "supergay". The responses indicated little to no behavioral expressions of

their sexuality, which differed from the researcher's experiences with White GLB individuals.

> "Out of the closet would be super-gay… because if I'm out, I like girls. I'm not in the closet because I'm not hiding it. So it's [closet] cracked. Because I think I'm progressing into it opening all the way" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 545-549).

> "That's an extreme gay. I don't know—like you'll see a lot of fems do the whole rainbow thing. And me, you already know I'm gay, so you don't really have to [broadcast it]" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 675-685).

> "I just keep that to myself. Now some people want to show everybody, this is me. That's cool, that's them. But some people are more conservative with their sexuality, just keep it to myself. Not necessarily on the down low—it's just that if someone asks you, yeah I'm gay, no problem" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 238-242).

Community involvement. There was little discussion of political involvement, a few students discussed the importance of voting and being politically active, but none expressed their actual involvement. Their community involvement extended to social interaction at gay clubs and bars. Similar to other inconsistencies with GLB literature, these differences could be a result of cultural factors or where they are in their developmental process.

> "Yeah. Actually, I went to vote … for same sex [marriages]…in Houston" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 458, 460, 462).

> "I think I need to be [politically active]. There's lot of community service you can do—just educating people. And how rights and how equality should be or if they don't understand, this is what it is…I think that's something that I'm going to do more of" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 727-734).

Themes five through nine highlighted the participants' description of their sexual identity. Unlike the racial identity development process, the sexual identity process followed general sexual identity development stages. The next two themes: resistance to labeling and dual existence, focus on the implications of racial and sexual identity integration.

Theme Ten: Resistance to Labeling

TABLE 13: THEME TEN

Theme Ten: Resistance to Labeling

Theme ten related to the dual integration of race and sexual orientation. Elements of this theme surprised the researcher. Unexpectedly students expressed a discomfort and inability to explain their sexual identity. They refused to label themselves and did not want to be constrained or judged by a label. Several students expressed themselves as just "Michelle" or just "Isabel". Some students had a hard time finding words to describing their sexual identity and until the interview had never thought about their sexual identity development. It should be noted that the students provided a label for the purpose of the research, despite their resistance to labeling. The researcher analyzed the data according to the sexual orientation given by the student, to differentiate between subjects.

> [How do you identify your sexual orientation?] "Me… No…just me. Me likes whatever…I'm just like…I can't…I don't really judge people" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 240, 243, 247).

> "I don't like to label myself. I just consider myself me. I just like whatever comes my way" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 281-282).

> "Yeah, I just don't label myself…Because I feel I can have the best of both worlds, why not go for it" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 203, 207).

> "I don't like labels. If you notice, I didn't say I'm an African American as most Blacks would say. I just don't like labels because I'm not typical. I can equally fall in any category so I just prefer not to have a label in anything" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 119-122).

Calista vacillated between sexual labels during the interview and had a difficult time committing to one identity.

> "I guess right now you could label me as a lesbian, but also bisexual because I have no problem with being with a guy. I just, at this very moment, I choose to be with a female. But I have no problem with being with a male" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 125-131).

Nancy not only refused to be labeled, but also had difficulty in describing her sexual orientation.

> "I would have to say…can't find good words… My mind's drawing a blank. I know what I want to say but I can't find the words. I've gone blank" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 302, 314-315).

As African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students, these individuals attempt to integrate at least two social identities. For lesbian and bisexual women, they are forced to integrate three marginalized social identities, race, gender and sexual orientation. The dual integration of marginalized social identities poses a challenge in obtaining a positive identity. African Americans face multiple oppressions, contending with racism, sexism and homophobia. As members of an ethnic community, these students already struggle with the negative labels and stereotypes applied to the African American community; and identifying as members of the homosexual or bisexual communities also makes them susceptible to additional prejudice, negativity and stereotypes. Living with prejudice and consistent messages of inferiority makes them vulnerable to an unhealthy psychological functioning and a negative self-image. As a result, participants' resistance to labeling and the difficulty in self- identification are implications of dual integration. Refusing to label one's sexual orientation makes them unable to be categorized, and protects the students from additional oppression (Jones, 1997).

TABLE 14: THEME ELEVEN

Theme Eleven: Dual Existence

Another implication of dual integration is the existence of a double lifestyle. Students, who felt disclosure to family was too much of a risk, maintained a secret homosexual or bisexual lifestyle. The homophobia and cultural values within the African American community tend to have a negative influence on the coming out process. For African American GLB individuals, family is a major support system. Alienation from family support is often more dangerous, and even riskier for the participants who are financially dependent upon their parents. Before college, many of the students were involved in heterosexual relationships to cover up their same sex desires or relationships. Students discussed two different lifestyles at home and at school.

> "A lot of my friends didn't know. Or if they knew, they had heard. So I didn't want…I wanted to be accepted and I didn't want to lose any friends so I didn't tell them. The friends that knew, I didn't care, and I had fun and was myself and it didn't matter. But in front of certain people, I wouldn't say I'd act different, just certain things I wouldn't do or wouldn't say in front of them" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 311-315).

> "Like if I talk to the first ex-boyfriend, …I'll be like oh yeah I talked to him and my mom and dad still think we're going to hook back up so I kind of play with that when I'm at home. Other than that I just don't say anything about anything" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 608-609,611-613).

> "So between the times of seven in the morning till 6:30 in the afternoon, I had to live this, okay, I'm not gay, I like, I'm with this guy. But then after that, I was with her and it was anything. You know, you could do anything, say anything, just be comfortable, be yourself" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 283-286).

> "I had a boyfriend, whatever you want to call it. But back then I was like hiding, I was using him for cover to get…people to know I have a good boyfriend. But behind, I was doing something else" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 226-228).

> "It's real difficult because … I live the life of trying to be secretive" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 321-322).

Similar to resisting labeling, maintaining a dual existence seems to be not only an implication of dual integration, but a means for protection. Students avoided the risk of being alienated from family and friends by living a double lifestyle. By living a part of their lives secretly, the students were able to weave in and out of the heterosexual and homosexual/bisexual community. However, dual existence is costly. Section two of chapter four discusses the costs of dual existence and other implications of dual integration.

Section Two: Second Interview Results

In the second interview students were asked to describe their sexual and racial identity development since coming to college and the challenges facing African American GLB individuals today. The second interview focused heavily on developmental changes since high school and the interaction of race and sexual identity. Similar to section one of chapter four, the themes are organized according to their relation to the research questions. The following nine themes were developed during data analysis: 1) Changes in Racial Identity; 2) Contributions to Racial Developmental Change; 3) Environmental Effects on Overall Development; 4) Transitions in Sexual Identity Development; 5) Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes; 6) Challenges; 7) Racial Effects on Sexual Identity Development; 8) Conceptualizations of Race as a Homosexual/Bisexual Individual: and 9) Societal Support/Acceptance.

Each theme, category, and subcategory is described in relation to a specific research question. Themes one through three describe recent racial identity development changes. Themes four through six describe transitions in the sexual identity process since coming to college. Themes seven through 10 discuss the implications of the dual identity integration. The themes for section two are displayed in Tables 15-17, and as a reference to the reader, a table of the theme discussed precedes each section.

TABLE 15: SECOND INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

1a) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development?

Theme One: Changes in Racial Identity
- Categories
- Increase in positive racial sentiment
  - Subcategories
  - Pride
  - Empowerment
- Increased awareness
- Critical assessment of racial dynamics
- Developmental Stagnation

Theme Two: Contributions to racial developmental change
- Categories
- Institutional Support
- Family/Friends
- Church

Theme Three: Environmental Effects of Overall Development
- Categories
- Being the majority
  - Subcategories
  - Advantages

TABLE 16: SECOND INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

1b) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their sexual identity development?

Theme Four: Transitions in Sexual Identity Development

Categories

Commitment/Self-Identification

Manifestations

Subcategories

Rejection of Societal Mores

Speaking out

Theme Five: Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes

Categories

Institutional environment and support

Subcategories

Homosexual and bisexual student community

Support

Family/Friends

Theme Six: Challenges

Categories

Societal/Interpersonal

Subcategories

Employment

Interpersonal conflict

Survival Techniques

TABLE 17: SECOND INTERVIEW THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES

3) What are the implications of dual identity integration?

Theme Seven: Racial Effects on Sexual Identity Development

- Categories
  - Developmental delays
  - Preparation

Theme Eight: Conceptualizations of Race as a Homosexual/Bisexual Individual

- Categories
  - Criticism
  - Awareness

Theme Nine: Societal Support/Acceptance

- Categories
  - Isolated support systems
    - Subcategories
      - Gay communities
      - African American community
  - Implications of isolated support

Theme One: Changes in Racial Identity

TABLE 18: THEME ONE, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme One: Changes in Racial Identity
Categories
Increase in positive racial sentiment
Subcategories
Pride
Empowerment
Increased awareness
Critical assessment of racial dynamics
Developmental Stagnation

The participants were asked to discuss racial awareness and exploration since coming to college. Overall students expressed an increase in positive racial sentiment and heightened awareness of history, struggles and other cultures. Students from predominantly White backgrounds felt more accepted as an African American since coming to college and as a result more secure in their racial identity.

> "In high school I was still dealing with the Black people saying I was white, but at SEBU they don't really do that. I'm Black and that's just how it is" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 5-6).

Increase in Positive Racial Sentiment

Attending an HBCU instilled racial pride and solidified their identity as an African American individual. Surrounded by other Blacks, students felt comfortable with being who they were and developing their racial identity.

Pride. Racial pride was a prevalent theme that surfaced during data analysis. Students described an increase in pride since coming to college. Learning about African American history, and heritage instilled pride that was not evident before coming to college. Cross' Model of Psychological Nigrescence (1980) would label the increased

pride and pursuit of cultural history and information as the period of immersion and emersion of stage three.

> "Now I've learned a little bit more about African American. Like I said, my family wasn't real big on Juneteenth celebration and things. But here at an HBCU you can see how everyone else feels about their race and I've learned a lot about it. I'm a lot more aware. Not to say I wasn't proud before but a lot more proud to be black. [I've] learned what people struggled for, not just what they teach you in textbooks, you can see it firsthand" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 7-11).

> "I would say I got it [pride] more being here in college cause then you may have learned something that was done by a Black person that you never knew. Small inventors and things like that… and you think you can accomplish something too" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 55-57).

> "Since I just took African American history, I understand the struggle in- depth, in the past you just got a glimpse of what was going on" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 41-42).

> [Being at SEBU] gives me… I have pride in everything that I do and everything that I am because…I don't have to hide anything any more because I know I'm more aware of what I need to do and what I have to do" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 31-34).

Empowerment. Social interaction with successful Black leaders and African American alumni gave them a sense of empowerment and hope for the future. Professors on campus also empowered the students and pushed them to be better.

> "And so to me when we have an organization like that is brought up in the schools, it gives me some hope. It's a real positive thing, …hey there are going to be some Black lawyers out there, that you will actually see" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 92-95).

> "Meeting friends, their parents, their families…. You meet some people that are like.. just like off the charts. Their parents are successful, they do whatever they want. …It just makes you feel more powerful, like you can do whatever you want to do" Nancy (Lesbian, 23, lines 27-29, 53-55).

Increased Awareness

Students not only described an awareness of cultural heritage, but also an awareness of their own biases towards other cultures.

> "I used to hear growing up… don't get to close to the White people cause they aren't like you, they don't do this, they don't do that--- they think they're better than you. But when I came out here, I saw for myself, they are really cool—they are really cool people" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 41-44).

> "I respect everybody… everybody's cultures and everybody's differences and I take that into consideration.… I didn't used to do that, because I was so enclosed in my environment" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 35-37).

Racial identity models label the heightened awareness of history and culture as a crucial aspect in the racial identity development process, causing an individual to examine their racial background and current racial paradigm (Cross, 1978; Evans et. al, 1998; Helms, 1994; Phinney, 1990). It should be noted that while students' described an increase of racial pride and cultural awareness, they did not describe this process as a result of self initiated immersion into the African American culture. Students did not express initiatives of racial exploration. The increase in positive sentiment could be due to environmental factors and institutional curriculum. A mission of the institution requires every incoming student to enroll in a first year seminar class and diversity course. These classes involve an extensive discussion of African American history and culture as part of the course curriculum. Students may have been compelled to learn and examine culture and racial history as a part of course requirements, thereby increasing cultural awareness.

Critical Assessment of Racial Dynamics

College students described having a broader perspective of racial dynamics. Since coming to SEBU, participants observed both negative and positive aspects of the African American community. Participants' gave a critical assessment of African American college students, racism between African Americans, and the negativity within the community.

> "Umm, I realize how… how much racism that really that went on, especially like within one ethnic group… its almost like people just want to pull you down before you can get up. You really have to ground yourself in what you believe in, and you

> really have to find yourself or otherwise you will just get sucked into the system and won't really go anywhere" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 70-71, 79-81).
>
> "It changed a little…not bad about Blacks, but seeing how we act together. We talk about the White man being racist, but I learned there's some Black racists too. Lighter people don't like dark people and dark people don't like light people and straight hair don't like nappy and natural hair" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 54-57).
>
> "Being at SEBU, you see that there are some positives that comes out of it cause the majority of our teachers are African Americans. They want you to succeed. But there are a lot of people here that don't have that same goal and are here because it's fun… it showed me how African Americans don't focus on education as much as other races—they take it for granted" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 8-9, 16-17).

The researcher labeled this theme as critical assessment, however Cross' (1978) Model of Psychological Nigrescence would label these statements as anti-Black attitudes prevalent in the Preencounter stage. According to Cross (1991), anti-Black attitudes are dominated by racist stereotypes. Individuals who define their identity based on what they do not like tend to look at African Americans from the same perspective as White racists (Cross, 1991). While the researcher can see the validity in Cross' argument, she tends to disagree with this viewpoint. Cross' model, along with others do not allow for criticism of one's own racial reference group. The researcher does not view student critiques as evidence of a lack of racial identity, but rather signs of developmental maturity. This analysis could be due to where the researcher is in her own racial identity development process.

Developmental Stagnation

While some students described changes in their racial identity development, other students reported little to no change. The participants stated that they view race and racial identity the same as when they were in high school. While progression does occur at different rates, these students seem to be at a standstill in their development. They expressed contentment at their current level. This would not be labeled stagnation if

students were at a mature level of development, but statements in the first interview indicate to the researcher that the students are not in the advanced stages of racial identity development.

> "[Have your conceptions or how you think about race changed since you came to college?] No...[So you still feel the same way you felt about race?]… basically, yeah" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 23-30).

> "I don't do anything else so there's nothing else that's gonna make me aware of things" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 169-170).

> "I'd say I don't know…I don't look at it like that, I just be me. I don't compare the two" Hanna (Lesbian, 22, lines 46-47).

Some models would view the developmental stagnation as regression. According to Cross (1991), during the Immersion- Emersion stage the old identity is at war with the new identity. When individuals are overwhelmed with negative experiences and are not experiencing positive growth, there is a tendency to regress back to the old identity as reaction to the disappointment of the racial reference group. As individuals subjected to ostracism and homophobia by their own reference group, these students may harbor negative attitudes that propel them to embrace their old identity and reject the new identity (Cross, 1991).

Theme Two: Contributions to Racial Development

TABLE 19: THEME TWO AND CATEGORIES

Theme Two: Contributions to Racial Developmental Change
Categories
Institutional Support
Family/Friends
Church

In theme two, the participants described factors that contributed to their racial developmental changes since coming to college. Students attributed their positive change to their institution, family and friends, and church.

Institutional Support

The environment at SEBU created an environment where students felt safe, comfortable and supported as African Americans. Through programs, events and caring professors, students felt that racial identity was supported and celebrated. The encouragement and celebration of African American culture developed a sense of pride and solidified who they were as African Americans.

> "With like the alumni and stuff … I received a letter from the alumni last year … congratulating me with the success of the full year. I felt like they were encouraging me" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 125-127).

> "My professors … try to get me to see things – they try to help me guide my mindset with my sexuality and my other stuff and they try to blend it with my education" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 48, 50-51).

> "It's an all Black college. It's really supported. You see a lot of people trying to reach out and do better and work toward our career. I don't know if I was expecting that coming in, I think I'm better off than if I had gone somewhere else" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 40-42).

> "Yeah. In a way, cause even with White professors, they understand the struggle that Blacks have to go through as well. They do their best… and sometimes the fraternities will have a forum and talk about history or about things as a Black man" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 66-67,71-72).

Some students felt that the institution supports their racial identity, but there could be more support.

> "For the most part yes, I think it could be a lot more to things to help… us go to the corporate world, I mean the business world. I mean its college and you get kinda prepared for that… I think we could just have more… more people here talking to us about different things. Umm, being Black or being around Black people just isn't enough" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 113-117).

> "I don't think it's supported as much as it needs to be. Because its almost a given that your at an HBCU,…so everybody knows that its majority Black so they don't have to push that out there" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 59-61).

> "I think that SEBU can be not so zoned in on the traditional Black things. A lot of students are alternative Black, if you wanna call it. They are so into rap and those type of things. They could definitely do more things…like homecoming is coming up and I know they'll try to get a rapper, but they could try to get a neo-soul or alternative or something" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 110-114).

Family/Friends

Students also felt that African American friends and family helped shape their racial identity in a positive way.

> "Just things we do like barbecues and Christmas and celebrating Kwanzaa and stuff. With my friends, just being around them, going to Black clubs and things like that" Hanna (Lesbian, 22, lines 85-86).

> "My family…yes… because my grandmother went to SEBU also. And I guess with my parents wanting me to go to Black colleges when I didn't want to go" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 192-193).

Church

For other students their church celebrated their racial identity and positively affected their development.

> "I have been going to this church since I was 7. I basically grew up in the church and I knew all the members and all the new members, and so I have a lot of mentors in church and most of them really helped me with looking for a college. They seem to encourage us-- like whenever the college students come back, they have get together and party and stuff, and they pray for us and anything that we are going through, and any academic help" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 134-139).

> "I finally came to church and that's when I got my first experience of African American history…they don't do Kwanzaa and all of that but they do history and just really into African American history. They have programs and stuff like that at my church" Brandy (Lesbian, 20, lines 133-136).

Theme Three: Environmental Effects of Overall Development

TABLE 20: THEME THREE, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Three: Environmental Effects of Overall Development
Categories
Being the majority
Subcategories
Advantages

Students reiterated throughout the interview the benefits of attending an HBCU and the impact it had on their personality and identity development. Theme three discusses students' perspectives of attending a Historically Black University, and the benefits of not being a minority.

Being the Majority

As a member of the majority race on campus, students were not forced to think about race. They felt comfortable to be themselves which allowed them to focus on other issues, namely their sexual identity. This could be a factor in their developmental process and explain why several students expressed never thinking about racial identity until the interview.

> "I think about because this is who I am, and the field that I am going in…teaching, you have to think about how it relate to other races or ethnic groups.. I should say. You just have to kinda think about it, it's not… I am not forced to think about it, you know…as if I was on an all White school or something like that. I am with family so… it really doesn't even come up" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 59-65).

> "It's not something I have to think about. If I were in a White setting I would have to think about it and question people's behaviors and beliefs and thoughts. I would feel like my actions are representative of all Blacks. [At SEBU, race]…it's one less

thing I have to worry about. College itself is already stressful" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 46-52).

Advantages. Students expressed the benefits of being African American at a HBCU. Students did not feel like a stereotype and were surrounded by others who shared common cultural values. While on campus they felt empowered and free to be themselves.

> "It's a privilege because you're around your race and can learn about people and their background and see their struggles and how they've succeeded and overcome some obstacles" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 53-55).

> "I feel less as a second class citizen. I see people trying to help us do better and be better, black people…so we won't be the stereotype" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 16-17).

> "I always wanted to go to a school where you can… be around, everyone is basically the same is you, whereas going to a White school…like at a Black school you hear Black music" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 49-50).

> "It's cool, cause you get to kinda feel like white people do, and look at other races funny when they come in. You know not to be racist, but you have the power. It makes you go out into the world feeling like you have power" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 22-24).

For Michelle, not having to think about race provided her the opportunity to focus on other aspects of her life.

> "It allows me to focus more on what I am here to do instead of proving things to people" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 60-61).

While a majority of the students expressed the advantages of being the majority on campus, Calista felt that being the majority lulls individuals into a false sense of security. When individuals step out of the comfort zone of being the majority, they will have to make necessary adjustments to survive in a society controlled by the Whites.

> "But it can hinder you because that's not how the real world is. When you go get a job 9 times out of 10 it's gonna be someone other than an African American interviewing you or the CEO of the company. It makes you think…the only people at SEBU that are in higher positions are African Americans, but in the real world that's not how it is and it's not as easy" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 55-59).

Summary

Similar to the first interview, students' descriptions of their racial identity do not fit one particular model. Elements of some stage models are more applicable than others. The students' descriptions of their racial identity development are as diverse as they are. It is important to remember that every individual has different experiences that contribute to their racial identity development. The lack of detail about their racial identity may be a direct result of feeling the need not to provide in-depth information. Additionally, in the aforementioned theme, being the majority, with little interaction with the dominant culture may also have had a direct effect on their racial identity process and the quality of the responses. Regardless, these factors may have influenced the findings of the study.

The next three themes describe the participants' sexual identity process since college. Similar to the first interview, the students' sexual identity experiences follow the general pattern of many coming out models. Theme four and five provide an overview of participants' sexual identity process after high school and the contributions that facilitated developmental changes. Theme six highlights the societal and institutional challenges of being an African American gay, lesbian or bisexual student.

Theme Four: Transitions in Sexual Identity Development

TABLE 21: THEME FOUR, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Four: Transitions in Sexual Identity Development
Categories
Identification/Self-Identification
Manifestations
Subcategories
Rejection of Societal Mores
Speaking out

Theme four captures participants' descriptions of changes in their sexual identity since they came to college. According to sexual identity models and developmental research, positive transitional development occurs during late adolescence and early adulthood. This period is often marked by the transition from identity awareness to identity acceptance (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1984). Commitment, acceptance and self-identification have been positively correlated with higher self-esteem and overall adjustment (Evans et. al, 1998; Rhoads, 1994; Troiden, 1989). Comparable to previous studies, students described their transition as a journey from rejection to acceptance, hate to love, and from shame to pride. Some participants continued living a dual existence, while others' public and private identities became synonymous with increased self-esteem and security.

> "In high school I was…I've been bisexual forever so being at home I had to live a double life. I couldn't be myself except around friends and I had to worry about people knowing and seeing me do things. As far as now in college, I don't have to worry about people going back and telling. Now that I'm older, even if they do tell, I would admit it. But now it's just that change itself and maturing within myself as well. I have become a whole different person" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 296-303).

> "I would say when I started, I was against it, then somewhat for it, and curious and I sort of feared it, then I embraced and then I just accepted it" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 243-344)

> "I am mainly different because I love who I am now, and before I couldn't say that. Even with all the discrimination and double standards… I am happy with the choices that I made. There wasn't a real instance when I wanted to talk to girls or this is what I want to do—because it never really was, it just kinda happened, just trying something out and liked it, and its something that I like to do and this is who I am, and I have just accepted that. It was difficult at first and I was confused about it and didn't really know if there was something that I wanted to do or even wanted to even try to do because it seemed so hard and so stressful … it has made me stronger because you don't really think about bisexual or gay or whatever- it is just who you are" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 421-432).

> "In high school I always had a boyfriend so it could be like… so nobody ever had an actual guaranteed answer unless I told them. In college, my freshman year when I was at SEBU I stayed to myself cause it was certain people that knew me and knew that I talked to females so it was already, oh Fe likes girls. But my sophomore year I just kinda matured and realized this is my life and in order for me to be happy I can't live by what other people want, I have to satisfy myself and not others" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 268-275).

Commitment/Self-identification

Participants also expressed feeling more secure with their sexual identity. There was a sense of commitment to their sexual identity that was not evident before college. Committed to their sexual identity, students expressed feelings of pride, happiness and freedom.

> "My strength in myself grows everyday. When you can accept yourself it gets better and better and better" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 246-247).

> "I am very secure in my sexuality. I just to choose who I talk to and what I do more carefully now. I just feel more comfortable in myself because back then I didn't have that mindset and was doing it just to be doing it" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 86-88).

> "I guess it came with me feeling better about myself in general. Cause at first I remember when I first came to school; I guess you could say I had low-self esteem. I was not happy with myself, and I did not really know what I wanted out of life, out of anything really. I was just going because it was something I knew I had to do. I did not really have an option. I guess when I found myself, I found that confidence. If this is something that I want to do, I am going to do it and I am going to be proud about if, that does not say I have to flaunt it or doesn't say I have to be out with it…but just be proud of what you do" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 211-218).

Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher observed developmental changes from the first interview to the second. For example, in the first interview, Isabel had difficulty self-identifying as a lesbian, however by the second interview she was able to say the word but could apply the label to herself.

> "I am African American, I am a lesbian…I just said that!...It's a part of recognizing who I am. With those two elements you are really the minority of the minority" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 426,430).

Both the researcher and the participant were excited and surprised with her ability to vocally identify as a lesbian. As the rest of the interview progressed, Isabel exhibited excitement, and enthusiastically described her sexual identity development.

Manifestations

The internal developmental changes manifested into external outcomes. In Cass' (1979) Identity Pride stage, individuals are unconcerned with the impressions of others, and more outspoken about their sexual orientation. Students described becoming outwardly expressive of gay rights, and a lack of adherence to societal expectations of homosexuality or bisexuality.

> "I'm not worried about what others think now, I'm true within myself" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, line 98).

> "Now I am just like well if they find out they find out, I don't really care—this is me. I am not saying this is something that I would do for the rest of life, I mean mess with females or whatever, but if I choose to, I want to be accepted and if you don't – oh well , that is just my feeling now" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 166-169).

> "In high school I was ashamed of it. I was still trying to accept it for myself and then trying to get other people, like my mom, to accept it. In college, it's more this is me, if you don't like it, you don't like it. I just had to sit and think about it one day. If nobody else accepts it, they just don't" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 84-87).

Rejection of societal mores. Students informed the researcher that in high school, they faced gay stereotypes of dress, speech and behaviors. During college, they no longer cared about others' opinions or homosexual and bisexual mores. With increased self-acceptance the students no longer felt the need to live up to others' expectations and felt free to be themselves.

> "High school you got a stereotype…stud and femme…stud is like a tomboy. I was always a tomboy so I always dressed like a tomboy. But back in the day when I first came out, if you were a stud you had to dress a certain way…baggy jeans,

> jerseys, hat to the back, extra large shirts on…you had to basically had to look like a boy—like a thug almost. You had to talk slang. That's one of the biggest changes I can think of over the years. In college I came into my own self. I wear loose jeans but they're not baggy and I like collared shirts. I like my hat comfy, pulled down, I wear my glasses, I don't care. I don't buy the J's…I'd rather wear Polo boots. I don't do the slang…" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 209-217).

> "I don't have to be the stereotypical flamboyant male or the rock hard male that most people try to like or anything like that-- I am just Evan.…I don't have to dye my hair or wear skirts. I mean some people feed into the stereotypes, and that's a problem, but I did not feed into them" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 76-79).

Speaking out. Several students described incidents where they publicly voiced their opinions on gay issues. Providing an alternative perspective, the participants disclosed their sexual orientation to faculty members and classmates.

> "Oh, this semester I was taking Contemporary Social Problems… and one of our units was sexual identity, and everybody was saying what they had to say, and I was looking around like, do I need to support—you know.…Ummm so I rose my hand up, and said ok I will speak for the gays today. If you don't know now you know" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 196-201).

> "Everyday in class we talk about daily issues… And at the moment we were talking about gay people and the gay marriage thing and a lot of people speak and I speak up and I say that it's reality and y'all have to respect people, when judgment day comes, I have to pay for what I did, not you" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 131-135).

Depicted by these statements, the developmental transition from high school to college was insurmountable. The students' ability to be proud and open with themselves and others in college was in direct contrast to the secretive relationships and shameful feelings that marked the early stages of their development. Situational and relational factors in college facilitated identity development and the direction of the process. Theme five denotes the environmental and relational factors that induced these changes.

Theme Five: Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes

TABLE 22: THEME FIVE, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Five: Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes
Categories
Institutional environment and support
Subcategories
Homosexual and Bisexual community
Support
Family/Friends

"In addition to the identity process itself, environmental contexts are important to fully understand gay identity exploration" (Stevens, 2004, p 185). Although all students must adjust to the college environment, gay, lesbian and bisexual students must also navigate institutional homophobic and heterosexist manifestations. For a majority of the participants, college has been associated with support and positive experiences. Positive experiences facilitate self-identification (Troiden, 1989). In this theme students discussed the campus environment and other factors that positively correlated to their sexual identity development.

Institutional Environment and Support

According to Stevens (2004), perceptions of the college environment factor into whether a student decides to disclose. For these students, SEBU was a place where they felt comfortable to explore their sexuality. The relatively large number of gay, lesbian and bisexual students on campus made them feel safe to disclose their sexual identity.

> "I'm more open. And yeah, I'm more secure because I have the ability to be more open here" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 227-228).

> "I think when I came to school and became more secure being Black, I was like I am Black, now let me go work on being a lesbian. Now I've become more secure being lesbian. Once you find out "you" you can find out your other [identities]…lesbian, gay, whatever" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, 358-360).

Homosexual and bisexual student community. The relatively large GLB student population at SEBU, created a strong homosexual and bisexual community. For most students the presence of a GLB community was a welcoming change and promoted social interaction with other homosexual and bisexual individuals. For some students, this was the first time they openly interacted with a large number of GLB individuals. According to D'Augelli (1994), involvement in the community facilitates a gay, lesbian or bisexual social identity.

> "It's not like it used to be, just small—if you're gay, you knew who else was gay. It's a big community now" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 183-186).

> "I feel a lot more comfortable. You just can't walk with your best friend who's straight, and say hey blah blah about a certain individual, because she looks at your crazy. It's kinda weird for her and I don't want to put her in that kind of position, and so… it's better to be around people in the same community" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 451-455).

> "Being at SEBU gave me an opportunity to be more open with my sexuality because there were so many people there—faculty and students who are homosexual or not heterosexual. It gives you the opportunity to be free and do your own thing" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 220-222).

Support. Inconsistent with previous literature (Love, 1997; Braud, 2005) on religiously affiliated institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, students felt that their sexual identity was supported on campus. It should be noted that students' definition of support did not match the researcher's perceptions of a supportive campus. Student descriptions of support resembled individual support rather than institutional support.

"Like when certain people give people a chance to be heard and understood. Like having forums and programs and people coming to talk. Yeah they support it, me especially" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 284-286).

"I know SEBU welcomes it… I mean no one gets treated any differently. I can't say that anything has happened just because I was am gay or just because I am not… they don't treat you any differently, girls guys no body--- staff" Nancy (Lesbian, 22, lines 104-105, 112-113).

"It gave me so much. I can chalk it up to God and SEBU- -the faculty and staff and the people at SEBU, that lended me that ear, that shoulder to cry on, the tissues for the tears. It just gave me a lot" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 212-213).

"For me as an individual it's been an easy one at SEBU, it's accepted there. It's a school full of African Americans so it's accepted. Large population of gays there so also accepted. So that's made the process an easy one thus far" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 586-588).

Several students felt that their sexual identity was tolerated on campus. Despite individual support, they perceived a lack of institutional support.

"I won't say it's supported…not like we have all these flags and we celebrate gay month in June and stuff…but I'm surrounded by people who either just don't care and accept me for me, and that's a lot better than high school cause they would have outcasted me. Even the most religious kids on campus here still accept me for me" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 114-120).

"I feel really shadowed because there are times when I do want to burst out and let everybody know I'm gay and I'm proud. I talked to the Dean and she was interested in my organization because she wants the gay students to have a safe haven. But then again, this is a religious Christian private school and when you think of Christianity and homosexuality, it's always going to go to the bible and how God doesn't ordain homosexuality… that would be controversial. So that's why I feel like it's silenced" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 83-93).

""", everyone backs you…until you start bringing negative attention to yourself" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 355-364).

"They just don't say nothing about it, they just push it in the corner" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, line 166-167).

Family and Friends

Past research (Troiden, 1989; Rhoads, 1994) has reported that "supportive family and friends facilitate formation of positive GLB identity and self-disclosure" (Evans et. al, 1998, p.100). Students talked of the encouragement from family and friends that fostered a positive self-image.

> "The people that I hang with were a big help as far as me finding myself" Jeff (Bisexual male, 20, line 116).

> "My mother always told me never to be ashamed of myself and be proud of who I am. She told me to pray about it and I did several times. It's hard living a double life, so I decided to start anew at college" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, line 92-96).

> "My friends calling me and checking up on me. It helps you because you know you have someone to lean on if you need somebody. Like on campus, people texting you... it just makes you feel better. It just lets you know that this thing is real and that there are positive things that can come out of a bad situation…Being gay and not wanting to [be]" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 184-186).

Despite the lack of perceived institutional support, the large GLB student community and supportive relationships contributed to the developmental transitions in college. Throughout the interview, students emphasized the importance of a supportive network of friends and peers. Support and self-love are necessary survival techniques to combat the challenges of being an African American gay, lesbian or bisexual student.

Theme Six: Challenges

TABLE 23: THEME SIX, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Six: Challenges
Categories
Societal/Interpersonal
Subcategories
Employment
Interpersonal conflict
Survival Techniques

> "If you don't support yourself, people don't support you. You think I chose to be gay? You think this is easy? Don't get it wrong, I'd drop it like a heartbeat" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 357-358."

Winston's quote summarized the general sentiment of participants' frustration with being gay, lesbian or bisexual. As African American GLB individuals they are forced to navigate through multiple layers of oppression to form a healthy integrated identity. In addition to the societal racism, sexism, and homophobia, African American gay, lesbian, bisexual college students struggle to survive in campus cultures grounded in homophobia and heterosexism. Theme six portrays the perceived institutional and societal challenges facing the students. Consistent with the extensive reports from African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, participants describe their everyday challenges. In discussing challenges, techniques for survival surfaced during the analysis and are included in theme six.

Societal/Interpersonal

Participants initially described general challenges that hinder African American GLB individuals. "Three strikes and you're out" cliché was a prevalent analogy used by

both males and females. As a "triple jeopardy" (Greene, 1994) students described feeling like the "minority of the minority". Employment and interpersonal conflicts repeatedly surfaced as general challenges. A few students mentioned familial acceptance, though it was not a prevalent theme. With the large proportion of the students in the closet from family, the researcher was surprised that familial acceptance was not deemed a greater challenge.

> "The challenges are the fact that I'm a woman, strike. I'm Black, strike. And I'm gay, strike. I have to deal with conservative White corporate American looking down on me. Three strikes, I might be out" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 132-136).

> "It's a struggle. First you're Black. Then you're a woman. On top of all of that, you're a lesbian" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 155-156).

> "Two negatives—African American, most of the time it is negative because of racism and then gay or lesbian you are dealing with discrimination. So you are going to have to find a way to make it into a positive with however society views it" Tiffany (Lesbian, 20, lines 474-475).

Employment. Employment discrimination and a lack of job opportunities were two prevalent categories that surfaced. Students expressed fear of discrimination and unemployment.

> "In some other work environments some people don't like that so on top of being an African American minority trying to move up…that could be something that brings you back down" Isabel (Lesbian, 22, lines 254-256).

> "Job opportunities, employers don't want you to be flamboyant, but as you become more comfortable, they become nervous" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 235-236).

> "Struggling with their family. I am a big family person and knowing that my aunts and stuff don't know and would struggle with it that would hurt" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 175-176).

Interpersonal conflict. The effects of internalized homophobia, low self-worth, low self-esteem, and negative psychosocial functioning were other challenges expressed during the interview.

> "[Biggest] challenge is being themselves, because some people have to put on a facade to work a 9 to 5 and then come home and just be themselves" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 159-160).

> "It'll hurt you more trying to hide it cause you can suffer from that and get real depressed" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, 408-409).

Jeff presented a different challenge for bisexual males, unbeknownst to the researcher.

> "Most Black gay females don't have problems because they can go back. They can go and have a man and female at the same time. They can share. As far as a male, once you're gay or bisexual, it ain't no coming back. A lot of people just can't understand that, so if a male wanted to be through with the gay scene, they'll always be viewed as being gay. There's no women who's really gonna wanna be with them" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 183-188).

Jeff feels that the inability to go back is a direct correlation of the amount of undercover African American gay or bisexual men, and the hesitation to come out.

> "That's why they stay more in the closet because they know it's gonna be so hard if they come out, it ain't no coming back. They friends that they have are probably not gonna want to be their friends anymore. That's why there's so many DL brothers, they're gonna always be labeled that" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 196-199).

> "Hell on earth. All is fine and dandy-- but trying to come to the positive person at the end is a tough road. You have to overcome so much and you have overcome what people think about you" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 114-116).

Survival Techniques

Based on these statements from Jeff and Evan, it is clear why disclosure for African Americans GLB individuals, especially males, is so difficult and rare. While the journey to becoming a positive person is difficult, these students utilized internal mechanisms and

external resources such as support networks, positive attitude and self acceptance to navigate through multiple layers of oppression.

> "Surround yourself with people that are accepting and are what you are. The more positive you put around you, the more positive you will be, just basically finding people who have the same thing in common with you" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 505-507).

> "Being gay, being anything, if you take the time to embrace yourself, just love yourself and things will come" Winston (Gay, 23, lines 392-393).

> "You have to learn to accept other people's opinions about you. You have to learn not to be offended by comments. You end up with a great sense of humor because of the comments" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 387-389).

While direct, this simple statement by Winston captures the most important characteristic for survival- strength.

> "If I weren't so strong, I would probably be fucking crazy" Winston (Gay, 23, line 342).

Summary

Themes four, five and six, described participants' sexual identity process, and the challenges facing African American GLB individuals and college students. Similar to the first interview, students' descriptions of their sexual identity follow general development stages. Unlike with racial identity, students were detailed and open in describing their sexual identity process since college. The participants described their journey with passion, and pain which affected the researcher much more than she expected. The results of this section both confirmed and surprised the interviewer's preconceptions.

The next four themes focus on the interplay between race and sexuality, and the implications of dual integration. Some students had difficulty answering questions about the symbiotic relationship between race and sexuality. Others saw each as a separate dimension with little interaction or influence on one another. Theme seven describes the

racial effects on sexual identity development, theme eight looks at the conceptualizations of race as a homosexual/bisexual individual, theme nine discusses social acceptance and theme ten presents the challenges of dual integration.

Theme seven: Racial Effects on Sexual Identity Development

TABLE 24: THEME SEVEN AND CATEGORIES

Theme Seven: Racial Effects on Sexual Identity Development
Categories
Developmental Delays
Preparation

Recent research studies have analyzed the effects of race/ethnicity on sexual identity development (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Eliason, 1996; Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000; Parks, Hughes & Matthews, 2004). The findings indicated that cultural factors do not impede sexual identity formation but delay identity integration. Consistent with these findings, participants reported delays in coming out due to homophobia within the African American community. Different from other studies, participants saw their racial identity development as preparation for their sexual identity development.

Developmental Delays

Homophobia within the African American community and within the Black church were seen as obstacles in the coming out process. Students felt the need to remain closeted to avoid rejection and ostracism from African Americans.

> "With the homophobia that I was used to back then, I waited until I was comfortable to come out. I was afraid someone was going to jump down my throat with a bible verse, tell me I was going to hell and was going to catch AIDS. Homophobia…it kind of shapes us to be timid about who we are…to keep it in the closet" Henry (Gay, 26, lines 189-195,199).

> "Coming from [deleted] it's not allowed for gay women. They don't like it, it's not accepted, it's man and woman, and if I probably didn't come to school, I'd still be there lying, I'd probably be scared to come out of the closet" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 180-184).

> "It's harder cause being Black period, being gay, you take so long to come out cause homosexual activity is gonna be looked down upon by others as well as your family… If I grew up in a White family I probably would have come out sooner than I would as a Black person" Jeff (Bisexual, male, 20, lines 209-213).

For Calista, being African American makes her wish she was not a lesbian.

> "Sometimes it makes you not want to be a lesbian, makes you want to stay away from it… cause you'll be stereotyped" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 417-419).

Preparation

While a majority of students saw race and culture as a negative effect on their sexual identity, others saw it as a strength and a source of motivation.

> "The struggle of just being black and learning that early on helped me with the struggle of being gay. It helped me develop that tough skill and not let people get under my skin…just being strong and being proud to be me" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 150-152).

> "It makes me strive for the things that my parents did not have. It makes me work even harder because of the adversities that my mother went through. Knowing that my position as a black gay man… I can change my community. It makes me stronger" Evan (Gay, 25, lines 141-145).

The effects of race on sexual identity development did not come as a surprise to the researcher. Sexual identity development research has consistently reported racial effects on the coming out process, thereby emphasizing the limitations of sexual identity models. It is assumed the relationship between race and sexuality is bidirectional. Early racial identity models neglected to include the dimensions of gender and sexual orientation in the development process. The influence of sexual orientation on racial identity development is discussed in the next section.

Theme Eight: Conceptualizations of Race as a Homosexual/Bisexual Individual

TABLE 25: THEME EIGHT AND CATEGORIES

Theme Eight: Conceptualizations of race as a homosexual/bisexual individual
Categories
Criticism
Awareness

Theme eight is an overview of how the students perceived their race and culture. As recipients of homophobia from their own culture, the participants tend to see African Americans in a negative light. While this may not be an indication of racial identity development it does have a direct effect on the process. Interestingly, students critiqued their community from a third person standpoint, detached from the community. The question arises: can an individual critique their culture without detachment and anti-ethnic sentiment?

Criticism

Hypocrisy was the prevalent theme revealed during the interview. Students felt that African Americans were extremely hypocritical when it came to gay, lesbian and bisexual Civil Rights.

> "People holler about racism…Black people, like I said, are hypocritical, we talk about racism all the time and equal rights for everyone but when it comes to being gay or lesbian or bisexual, I guess that's where the line stops" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 162-167).

> "I would think that with Black people having to deal with so much judging, they would be more open minded with people having to deal with that. You would think they would understand that the person is dealing with a lot and I think that's not right" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 167-170).

Carla saw the hypocrisy of African Americans in the media, and the lack of acceptance of homosexual or bisexual entertainers.

> "If you look in the media or on TV…entertainment, it's almost accepted to see a White gay man or White bisexual woman or gay woman. But if an African American woman does it …oh well why is she doing that or she's dumb or…They're always comments made. You have three strikes against you, it's just not accepted. It's mainly with African Americans, not necessarily because you are bisexual, but because you an African American who is bisexual" Calista (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 318-321).

Awareness

As a member of the homosexual and bisexual communities, students were aware of cultural characteristics specific to the African American community. Students exhibited anger and disappointment when they criticized the African American community.

> "Most Blacks are real religious and … have a tendency not to talk about things, but keep it under wraps" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 161-162).

> "It makes you realize that Blacks really want freedom and strive for civil rights but won't help out each other" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 437-438).

> "It just made me see how divided or how close-minded [Black] people are, you know" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 192-193).

Overall, the students had a negative assessment of African Americans as homosexual and bisexual individuals. The researcher saw this as an interesting dynamic. Looking through the transcripts within the same interview session, students expressed racial pride and love and then expressed extreme negative feelings as if they were not a part of the ethnic group. The students seemed to detach themselves from the referenced racial group when they expressed disappointment and frustration with the hypocrisy of the African American community. It is the researcher's opinion that this dynamic may have a direct effect on students' racial identity development.

Theme Nine: Societal Support/Acceptance

TABLE 26: THEME NINE, CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Theme Nine: Societal Support/Acceptance
Categories
Isolated Support Systems
Subcategories
African American Community
Homosexual/Bisexual Communities
Implications of Isolated Support

Human beings need to feel supported, accepted and affiliated with a community (Cross, 1991). As Audre Lorde (1984) explains, "it is healthiest for individuals to feel simultaneously accepted in all the important aspects of their identity" (Loiacano, 1989). However, for this population it is often impossible to find a community that offers that type of acceptance. The integration of marginalized identities creates a challenge in finding areas of holistic support and acceptance. The marginalization within the gay and racial communities forces the individual to obtain a diverse social network to derive a sense of connection and personal fulfillment support. Theme nine highlights participants' struggle in finding that sense of belonging.

Isolated Support Systems

A majority of the students never felt fully accepted within any community. Resources of racial fulfillment deemed unsupportive of their sexual identity and resources that supported their sexual identity were avoided because of racism within the gay communities. Outside of their peer group, areas of support were separate and ineffective in supporting multiple dimensions of their identity.

> [Do you feel supported?] "As an African American yeah, as a lesbian, sometimes…together, no" Calista (Lesbian, 19, line 499).

"Ain't nowhere I feel 100% supported" Greta (Lesbian, 23, line 442).

Carla expressed in detail what is like for her to not fully be accepted anywhere.

> "It's not good because I am not who I am all the time, I am part of me, not because I want to, but because I have to. I can't be open…It's a constant lie almost. You living a lie on one end, and on the other end you're really happy and content about yourself, but you can't be in front of certain people or certain places. It's hard, but you learn to deal with and move on" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 373-378).

African American community. Several students felt less accepted within the Black community when they finally disclosed their sexual identity. Research has indicated that within the African American community, when a GLB individual comes out, family members tend to ignore, deny or hide the issue of sexual orientation versus isolating the individual. In cases where the family is accepting and supportive, the individual support is often dependent upon the maintenance of an invisible social life (Romney, 2001; Bridges, Matthews, & Selvidge, 2003*).*

> "They don't accept me less that I'm Black, but a little less now that I'm a lesbian" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 538-540)

> " [If I were] straight and Black, I'd say…I'm accepted freaking anywhere. Straight Black women can go anywhere, if you got knowledge in your head too, you can go anywhere in this world, but I have to battle with my sexuality in a lot of places" Greta (Lesbian, 23, lines 418-422).

> " [I felt] a little less accepted. From the friends aspect in high school, I went to majority Black high school and they said it wasn't right and I was a hypocrite. If I were to tell my Black side of the family, they'd say it was the White in me…. The Black community is not accepting of it" Michelle (Lesbian, 18, lines 211-214).

Homosexual/Bisexual communities. Despite the large gay, lesbian and bisexual community in the area, students had a tendency to stay within their own community. They reported very little to no interaction with other types of homosexual communities. Students

reported the communities in the area were segregated with few opportunities for social interaction.

> I don't have much interaction with White gay males. I know one and he's accepted by everybody" Jeff (Bisexual, male, lines 203-204).

> "I don't see too many white people on my daily basis…I have a friend who goes to][PWI]… and she's White and a lesbian, but other than that. I've met probably in my whole life 6 or 7 others. But other than that I don't see too many. I know when they had the club open here in the area, you'd see a lot but even then when you walked, there was a bar area and all that was White but then there was another door you went through and it was hip hop. It was separated almost…White people and Black people" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 346-352).

> "You still have that percentage of whites who have that racism in them. Thinking we're [lesbians] going to fight and cause problems" Calista (Lesbian, 19, lines 558-560).

Implications of Isolated Support Systems

As members of conflicting communities, students kept identities separate, causing a barrier for identity integration. On a constant quest to find a sense of belonging, students expressed feeling caught in the middle of two communities. They felt forced to choose between multiple communities and multiple identities.

> *"*It's a really hard time finding a place as a Black or African American bisexual woman. You want that respect and authority, and men won't give it to you if they know you are bisexual sometimes or gay or whatever and women really won't because they think you are trying to hit on them all the time. You just have the real extremes. …You find yourself in the middle, trying to figure out whether is it easier to just be with guys or should I slowly be with girls and just deal with it… It's like you choose, you can be open and proud of who you are—or you are going to be successful and in the closet" Carla (Bisexual, female, 19, lines 267-274, 311-313).

Struggling to find balance between two different identities students are susceptible to losing their identity, or worse never developing into whom they want to be.

> "You got to worry about being true to your heritage and being true to the gay community. You gotta be true to everybody… living up to everybody's stereotype. You gotta be true to yourself, or you can lose yourself" Brandy (Lesbian, 21, lines 410-412,416-418).

The students fight everyday to develop a positive self image in a society of bias and discrimination. As a means of coping with the racism and homophobia, students avoided interaction that made them susceptible to further oppression. Students restricted their involvement with others beyond their peer group. For the students, their African American gay, lesbian and bisexual friends were a main source of support and provided experiences that facilitated an overall positive identity.

Chapter Four Summary

A total of 20 themes emerged from this study. The themes that surfaced in the first interview were 1) Diffusion; 2) Racial Identity Awareness; 3) Obstacles of Racial Identity Development; 4) Expressions of Race/Racial Identity; 5) Awareness of Same Sex Desires; 6) Identity Confusion; 7) Physical Experimentation; 8) Barriers Toward Acceptance; 9) Disclosure;10) Resistance to Labeling: and 11) Dual Existence. The following nine themes surfaced during the second interview: 1) Changes in Racial Identity; 2) Contributions to Racial Developmental Change; 3) Environmental Effects on Overall Development; 4) Transitions in Sexual Identity Development; 5) Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes; 6) Challenges; 7) Racial Effects on Sexual Identity; 8) Conceptualizations of Race as a Homosexual/Bisexual Individual; and 9)Societal Support/Acceptance.

Each theme, category, and subcategory was related to a specific research question. Respective themes addressed how students described their racial and sexual identity processes, while other themes highlighted the implications of the dual identity integration. In chapter five, the researcher will discuss the constructed model that describes the course of identity development of African American GLB students. The model will demonstrate how racial and sexual identity development processes interact, relating to the second

research question. This study is significant in that it provides valuable information to the GLB community, college administrators and the African American community of the identity development process of African American GLB students. The next chapter will not only describe the identity development model, but will discuss the implications of the study and provide recommendations for college administrators and future research.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study and present a theoretical model derived from the data. This chapter also includes a discussion of study limitations, research implications and recommendations for future research studies.

Summary

The goal of this qualitative study was to examine the racial and sexual identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black University. Specifically the researcher examined the integration of race and sexual orientation as it relates to identity development, analyzed the implications of dual integration on identity development, and constructed a model that described the course of identity development of these African American GLB students. The study was guided by these research questions:

1) How do African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students describe their racial identity development? Sexual identity development?

2) How do these processes interact?

3) What are the implications of dual identity integration?

The study used qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Fifteen students from varying classifications, ages, sexual orientation and majors, were interviewed throughout the course of the study. The two separate interview sessions were each an hour in length. All but one student participated in both interview sessions.

The first interview focused on the racial and sexual identity development prior to coming to college. The themes that emerged from the first interview were: 1) Diffusion; 2)

Racial Identity Awareness; 3) Obstacles of Racial Identity Development; 4) Expressions of Race/Racial Identity; 5) Awareness of Same Sex Desires; 6) Identity Confusion; 7) Physical Experimentation; 8) Barriers Toward Acceptance; 9) Disclosure; 10) Resistance to Labeling; and 11) Dual Existence.

The second interview focused on the participant's development since entering college. Nine themes emerged from the second interview session: 1) Changes in Racial Identity; 2) Contributions to Racial Developmental Change; 3) Environmental Effects on Overall Development; 4) Transitions in Sexual Identity Development; 5) Contributions to Sexual Developmental Changes; 6) Challenges; 7) Racial Effects on Sexual Identity; 8) Conceptualizations of Race as a Homosexual/Bisexual Individual; and 9) Societal Support/Acceptance.

Discussion

The participants in this study described their racial and sexual identity development process from early childhood to college. Their responses were categorized into major themes that directly correlated with the research questions. The following section is an overview of research findings as they relate to a specific research question.

Research Question One (a): How Do African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students Describe Their Racial Identity Development?

Racial identity models tend to explain how an individual progresses through several stages defined by different racial identity attitudes and levels of psychological functioning (Carter, 1991; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1994; Phinney, 1990). A majority of racial identity development literature on African Americans college students examines the influence of identity development in counseling situations (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The

lack of developmental literature on African American college students creates a challenge of connecting the findings to empirical research.

The racial identity process of the students did not follow a general racial identity pattern of development. The variation in responses tended to split the group into two different processes. The variation of racial identity development could be due to environmental factors. Students who grew up in White neighborhoods, or attended predominantly White secondary schools, described a different process from students who attended African American schools in homogenous neighborhoods. Individuals in the first group resembled the developmental process in Cross' Psychological Nigrescence Model (1971). They described their racial identity development as a transition from a lack of awareness and exploration to discovery of cultural heritage and racial awareness. At an early age, these students became aware of race and racial differences between themselves and their peers. While student responses were not congruent with Cross' first model (1971), his later revised model (1995) would view the students as low- salience. Individuals that are low-salience in the Prencounter stage are race-neutral and being Black does not play a significant role in their life (Cross, 1995). During the Encounter stage, students were bombarded with messages from family and school and encountered incidents that triggered a new worldview of racial identity. With an increased involvement in cultural activities and engagement during college, students stated that they became more secure in their racial identity and felt a strong sense of pride in being African American. This awareness resulted in a broader perspective of their identity as well as their racial reference group. The increased involvement and heightened awareness are typical racial attitudes in Cross' Immersion-Emersion stage and the Internalization stage. Their overall

racial identity development process was similar to their heterosexual counterparts. It is assumed that the participant differences were more of a result of environmental influences rather than sexual orientation.

The latter group of students who were consistently surrounded by African Americans had more difficulty in conceptualizing race and their developmental process. It was evident during the interview process that this group of students seemed to have difficulty in describing their racial identity process. The curt responses lacked detail, and the researcher's probing questions failed to elicit much depth. Race was never a conscious thought and they merely saw Black as a physical description. They had not thought much of their racial identity development nor spoken about it before engaging in the study. Value or meaning was not assigned to their racial identity before coming to college, which differed from the first group. As a means of dealing with racism and discrimination, some African Americans choose to remain in homogenous or "ethnically encapsulated surroundings rather than interact with different cultures" (Burt, 1998, p.82). They are able to maintain cultural values and traditions and manage the level of contact with the dominant culture. This may explain participant differences and why these students had more difficulty explaining their racial identity development. Nonetheless, despite minimal changes in their racial identity development since coming to college, students were able to speak to an increased awareness of cultural heritage and racial pride due to the their attendance at cultural activities sponsored by the institution.

Regardless of the process, students described obstacles in achieving a positive racial identity. The multiple oppressions of racism, discrimination and stereotypical images within society posed challenges in forming a healthy racial image. "Racial identity

theorists argue that African Americans differ in the extent and degree to which they identify with their ascribed racial/cultural group" (Carter, 1991, 105). The experiences within their racial group also influence the level of connectedness. Racism and prejudice within the African American community was also seen as negatively affecting their development. Students who were marginalized by family and peers expressed less positive sentiments and were more critical of their racial reference group. The same students tended to more readily identify with dominant society or interacted more with the dominant culture. Racial identity theorists see identification with the dominant culture associated with beginning stages of development and are often correlated with anti-Black attitudes (Burt, 1998; Cross, 1971; Cross, 1995; Phinney, 1990). Despite the external and internal challenges of racial identity development, the participants expressed pride in being African American and could assign value to the African American race.

Similar to other African American individuals, students' racial identity development relied heavily on the social interactions with family, friends, and peers and was shaped by the contexts of time and environment. According to Burt (1998):

> "Identity development is an epigenetic (Erikson, 1959) process that begins not a the point of entry into secondary school setting, nor does it begin shortly after the birth of a child. The emergence of group or individual identity is a continuum shaped by past, immediate and future environments… Like change, the only fixed characteristic that the concept of identity shares is that, dependent upon the context of the current environment, it will continue to change, emerge, and evolve upwards and outwards" (p.92).

While past models have provided extensive foundations in understanding how African Americans develop a healthy racial image, to accurately assess the current racial identity development of college students, researchers must take into account the influence and

interaction of family, cultural connectedness, self-concept and the prominence of other identities.

Research Question One (b): How Do African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students Describe Their Sexual Identity Development?

Unlike racial identity development, there was little variation in the sexual identity development process. Students' descriptions of their sexual identity development tended to follow the general timeline of other sexual identity models (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1989; Levine & Evans, 1991; Lociano, 1989, Savin-Williams, 1995). Several of these models saw sexual identity development as the journey of self-awareness to self-integration and identity management (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Brito, 1998); with early stages of development often associated with confusion, isolation and anxiety (Cass, 1979; Evans et. al, 1998; Troiden, 1989). Similar to their White counterparts, the first realization of same sex desires occurred in late middle school or early high school. Before the surge of same sex desires, sexuality was not prominent in their cognition. Comprehensive reviews of coming out research indicated that most GLB individuals often reported feeling different from their early childhood peers because they exhibited atypical gender-related behavior; and became aware of same sex feelings during puberty (Evans et. al, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1995; Troiden, 1989). The participants' realization of feelings was often triggered by an attraction to a close friend, peers, or social interaction with teammates. The awareness was followed by a period of confusion, where they questioned their feelings. Battling homophobic messages, and feelings of fear and rejection, students initially denied same sex desires and avoided any interaction with perceived members of the homosexual/bisexual community. As a means of testing these feelings, some students engaged in physical heterosexual or homosexual intercourse. These interactions either

strengthened their homoerotic desires or repelled heterosexual relationships. Earlier research found that GLB individuals often experimented with same-sex behavior before they labeled themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual (Evans et. al, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1995).

According to Cass' (1979) model, identity tolerance and acceptance would be the next logical stage. The participants discussed the obstacles they encountered in accepting their sexual identity. For some students, self-acceptance was yet to be achieved. Consequences of accepting a homosexual or bisexual identity, attachment to heterosexual norms, homophobia, and internalized homophobia were identified as challenges in identity acceptance. For African American GLB individuals, there is an intense pressure to conform cultural gender roles and heterosexual norms, which often hinders them from coming out and self-acceptance (Greene, 1994; Icard, 1986). A majority of students tolerated versus accepted their identity during high school and early years of college. Participants tended to disclose to select friends in high school. While some students came out to selected family members, a majority of students have still not disclosed to their parents and extended family network. Since coming to college, students expressed an increase in self-acceptance and security in their sexual identity. The institutional environment allowed them the freedom to explore their sexuality. The relatively large GLB community in college and the engagement in social activities encouraged them to become more open with themselves and others. Individuals who were more open and honest with themselves and others exhibited higher levels of commitment and pride in their sexual orientation. For a majority of GLB individuals, who and when to come out to "is integral never ending process of coming out" (Stevens, 2004, p. 187). With increased self-

confidence, acceptance and improved sense of self, individuals are more likely to be honest with them self and come out to others (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni and Soto, 2002; From, 2000; Rhoads, 1994).

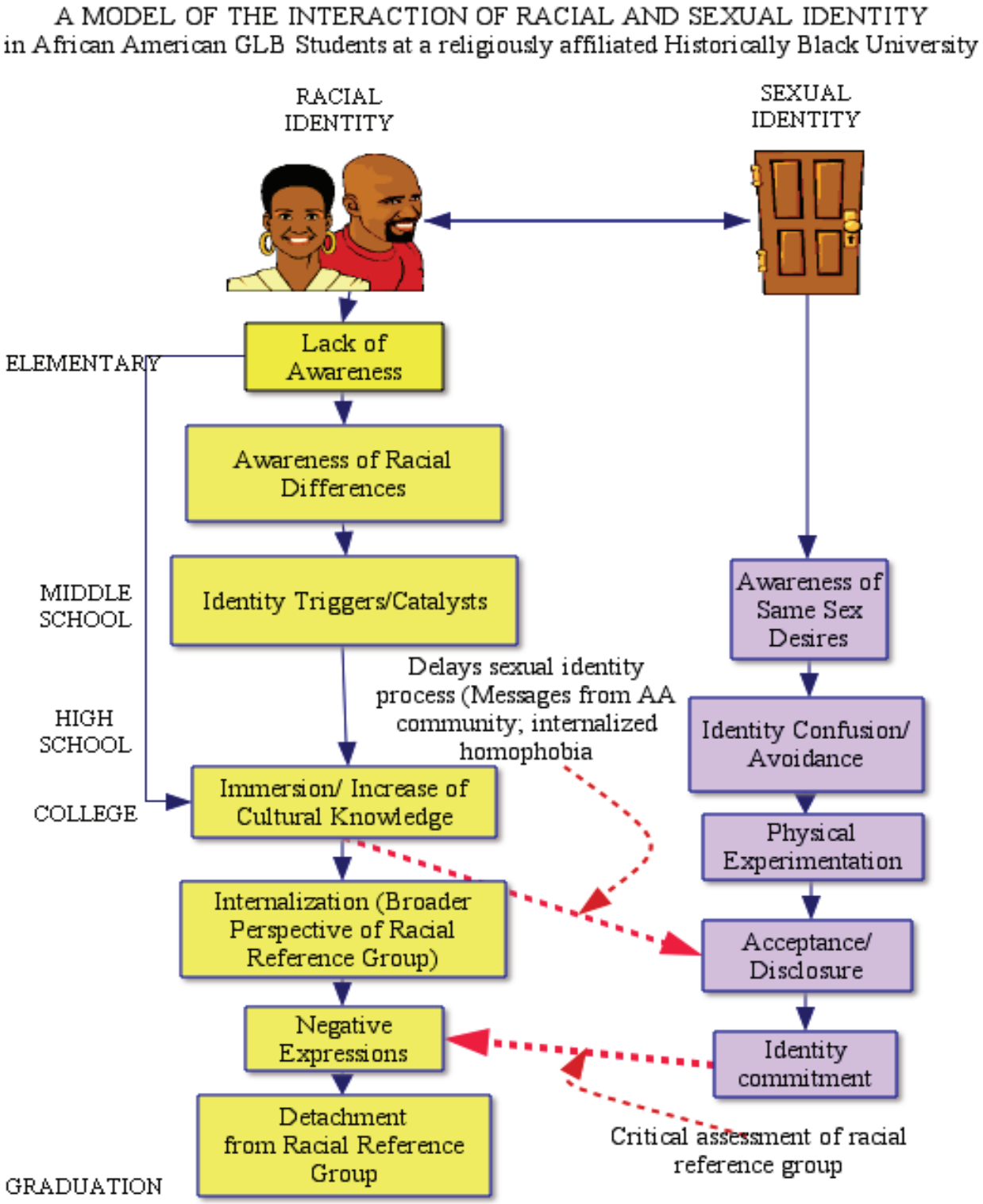
Similar to racial identity descriptions, students discussed obstacles in their sexual identity development. Homophobia, discrimination and judgment created barriers to developing a positive sexual identity. Students expressed feeling like the "minority of the minority", as they faced negative messages from their family and African American community. Students internalized these homophobic messages, creating additional challenges in their sexual identity development. Regardless of where they were in the development process, students were more detailed in their descriptions and openly expressed their journey of confusion, pain and love. While the responses fit general sexual identity models, no model adequately described their process. Previous models of "sexual orientation development has addressed self-awareness and movement toward self-acceptance" (Stevens, 2004, p, 188); however, few have examined the specific influences of racial/ethnic factors on identity development. The exclusion of racial dynamics and gender in sexual identity development research speaks to the need of a comprehensive model. This study was significant because it added to the gap in identity development research and highlighted the importance of multiple identity research. The next section answers the second research question and includes a model that incorporates the two processes and displays the interaction of dual identities.

Research Question Two: How Do These Processes Interact?

Similar to other college students, the participants are complex individuals with multiple identities. The intricacies with each identity make it difficult to explore all

identity dimensions simultaneously. Some aspects of self are actively explored, while others lay dormant in the background for later exploration or remain relatively unexamined (Montgomery, 2004). The Dual Integration Model (Diagram 1) provides a depiction of the racial and sexual identity development of these African American GLB students at a religiously affiliated HBCU, and the interaction of these two processes. While interaction effects were present, the students expressed their development in separate, parallel processes.

Diagram1:Dual Integration Model



Timing and Focus Effects. Students described development in the context of educational milestones. Racial identity developed first during elementary school, while the onset of sexual identity development occurred during middle school and early high school years. Students described the processes in a linear fashion with a single dimensional focus. The dimensional focus was dependent upon time, environment and life events. Racial identity seemed to develop first, with the internal conflicts of racial differences and social interactions with family and peers. The presence of same sex desires initiated sexual identity development and therefore caused a shift in focus. Similarly, findings in Jones (1997) indicated that "certain dimensions, such as race or gender, were experienced more keenly when external events or internal conflicts pushed a consciousness of a particular dimension" (p.384). At the onset of college, race was the initial focus until students became comfortable within their environment. As students became assimilated within the HBCU culture and perceived the support of their racial identity, they were able to focus on their sexual identity and other dimensions unique to their persona. The diversification of age within the participants led the researcher to believe that racial identity development remained dormant through the college years, while sexual identity was actively explored. This effect directly contrasted other findings in Jones' (1997). The participants in her study indicated that identity dimensions were experienced "not in isolation from one another but most often in concert with one or more personally relevant dimensions" (Jones, 1997, p.384). Additional developmental research is needed to discuss the inconsistency in findings and explore developmental changes after graduation.

Interaction Effects. Even though the processes were described in parallel time, the findings did suggest interaction effects. As seen by the red dashes in the Dual Integration

Model (Diagram 1), racial identity and sexual identity had a bidirectional influence on the developmental processes. Student responses highlighted the racial and cultural effects on their coming out process. As African Americans immersed themselves within the African American community, they attributed race and cultural factors to the delay of their coming out process and ability to disclose to their family and church community. This is consistent with prior research that reported racial effects on the coming out process for African Americans (Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Parks, Hughes & Matthews, 2004; Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004). While they share similar identity milestones with their White counterparts, racial identity causes a delay in identity formation and integration with the holistic self. This has been attributed to messages from the African American community with regards to sexuality and expectations of gender roles. Many African American gays and lesbians feel inadequate if they do not live up to gender role expectations (Greene, 1998). The adherence to traditional gender roles can inhibit the acceptance of alternative lifestyles or the inability to let go of heterosexual values and norms. The combination of race, cultural connectivity and familial socialization caused a delay in student's ability to accept their sexual identity and disclose to friends and loved ones.

While there has been minimal research on racial effects on the sexual identity process, research on the influence of sexual identity on racial identity has been nonexistent. This study was able to contribute to the gap in racial identity research. The findings indicated that sexual identity development did affect the racial identity of African American GLB students. As students became more committed and secure with their sexual identity, there was a surge of critical assessment of their racial reference group.

Students saw African Americans as hypocritical and expressed negative sentiments about the community. The researcher noticed that with the onset of negative sentiment from the critical assessment, students verbally detached themselves from the African American community. When an individual expressed racial pride and assigned value to their race, they spoke in inclusive terms such as "we" and "us". When they discussed the negativity within their own racial group, they tended to separate themselves from their reference group. While there is not enough data to indicate if there was a sense of regression or developmental stagnation, the data do indicate an effect on their perceptions of the African American race.

Research Question Three: What Are The Implications of Dual Identity Integration?

In the *Souls of Black Folks*, WEB Dubois (1903) discussed the bifurcation of Blacks in America. If one replaces American with gay, lesbian or bisexual, the eloquent words of 1903 are applicable to the struggles of these students today. Dubois (1903) stated,

> "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alones keeps it from being torn asunder…This longing to attain a self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost… He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his felloes, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" (p. 3-5).

For individuals who struggle to integrate marginalized identities, implications of dual integration are unavoidable and are a byproduct of the intersection of race and sexuality. The implications that emerged from the study were dual existence, resistance to labeling, isolated support.

Dual existence. The phenomenon of a double lifestyle was a prevalent theme that emerged from the study. The African American family serves as a protective barrier and source of support against racism and discrimination from society. As literature suggests, despite the homophobia within the African American community, GLB individuals reported a strong connection to the community and often cite their racial identity as primary (Greene 1994b). The fear of familial rejection and isolation created obstacles for students to come out to the family network. The respect that students felt toward their family and cultural community influenced their behavior and forced them to remain closeted, living a double lifestyle. To avoid further marginalization from family and church community, students felt the need to maintain a dual existence between home and at school. This dual existence allowed them the freedom to be out at school and outwardly expressive of the sexual identity amongst peers, while at home they simulated a heterosexual or asexual existence, avoiding topics of intimate relationships with parents and extended family. "Exercising control over the disclosure of a stigmatized aspect" can be an adaptive technique to address the oppressions of dual integration (Smith, 1997, p. 288).

Resistance to labeling. The resistance to being labeled was another implication that arose from the integration of race and sexuality. Students provided a label for the purpose of the research, despite their resistance to labeling. Some students expressed a discomfort in labeling their sexual identity. Several refused to accept a socially constructed label that would constrain and define who they are. This implication came as a surprise to the researcher, and initially served as a cause of her own discomfort as she watched students struggle with labeling themselves. At the beginning of the research process, the researcher

labeled the resistance as identity tolerance or a lack of acceptance. With deeper analysis, it can be argued that having to cope with the battles of being an African American, of which they have no control, some GLB individuals make the choice to not actively take on another stigmatized label that results in additional hardships.

Isolated support systems. The integration of marginalized identities poses the challenge of locating a supportive community. Participants felt caught in the middle of two systems, and felt forced to choose between two communities and two identities. Students toiled with the inability of finding a place where they fully felt accepted as African American gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals. The African American community failed to provide the support for gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, whereas students avoided the gay and lesbian community due to incidents of segregation and racism within the community. As a result, students kept their identities separate, causing a barrier for healthy integration. While only a few studies have looked at this specific phenomenon, literature on African American GLB individuals view to the lack of holistic support as a byproduct of multiple oppression (Boykins, 1998; Greene, 2000; Loiacano, 1989; Wall & Washington, 1991).

The interviewer observed that students did not discuss social interactions with non-African American GLB individuals. Students lived, studied and socially engaged with their peer groups, and rarely stepped outside of that comfort zone. Research by Stevens (2004) also found that gay males, who felt rejected by family and the gay community, lessened the impact of the racism, and homophobia by developing a support network of peers. In both studies the peer group provided the necessary support and served as a positive and safe environment for identity exploration and development. Along with dual existence lifestyles

and resistance to labeling, isolated support systems and self-segregation with peer groups emerged as implications of dual integration.

Researcher Reflections and Observations

The researcher's paradigm and observations are the crux of analysis. This section provides an insight to the researcher's journey through the research process. To represent ownership of the reflections and contextual lens, this section is written in first person.

The students' described their identity development as a rollercoaster of triumphs and tribulations. The research process and my development through this study could be described in a similar manner. As a student in the higher education administration program, and a student affairs practitioner, I embarked on this study in an attempt to gain understanding of an unfamiliar world, and provide an opportunity to hear the voices of students who have been silenced and excluded in past research. My interaction with the research participants was influenced by my heterosexual orientation, race, gender, biases and past interactions with White GLBT individuals at different institutions. After researching the literature, I noticed a huge gap in the literature and a need to conduct this type of research.

When discussing my research with colleagues and members of the GLB community, I often receive the comment of thanks for doing this research, but I actually need to thank the students for access to their lives, their world and their experiences. I have been changed for the better by engaging in this study. As a heterosexual African American female, I have garnered a better understanding of my heterosexual privilege, prejudices and biases that not only cripple myself, but the communities in which these students reside. In several instances, I found myself challenging the students' experiences because they did

not fit my ideas and exchanges based on my interactions with White GLBT individuals and literature. I found myself pushing them to be more vocal against injustices within their communities, and at times questioned their identity. This insight was brought out by the peer debriefer interviews and a review of the tapes.

> "Toya, you seem to be boxing them into your concepts of what gays should be like. This is not a lifestyle for them. Their sexuality is not all of their identity, it is just a part of them" (Peer Debriefer Interview, December 12, 2005).

One discussion revealed alternative explanations of the participants' lack of social activism. I initially thought that the lack of social activism was a result of where they were in their development. These students were not politically active in either community. After the discussion, I realized that the lack of political activism could be due to the lack of role models or the lack of institutional support of community involvement.

> "You don't see too many African American gay activists, you see more feminists, but are not individuals that are actively advocating for the rights of African American GLB individuals. How do they know how to lead, when they have little guidance or knowledge of other activists" (Peer Debriefer Interview, January 12, 2006).

As these examples indicate, I wrestled with several alternatives and honestly still struggle with settling on one explanation. However the importance is not in the explanations, but , but in the research itself.

Observations

During the interviews, I noticed a couple of observations that contributed to the analysis of data. Throughout the interviews, I witnessed a lack of continuity in responses. In one breath students would express their pride in being gay, lesbian or bisexual and in the next statement would reveal that they did not want to be homosexual or bisexual. This perplexed me, and I immediately asked for clarification during the interview. For some of

the students, they did not realize the inconsistency in their statements and for others they expressed that the duality of thought represented their struggle in their own identity development.

I also witnessed a sense of present self-identification. Despite the difficulty in labeling themselves, when asked what their sexual identity was, they stated their identity in terms of present behavior and relationships. The participants defined who they were by what relationship they were in that time, and not based on an overall attraction. This was strongly tied to individuals that held firm to heterosexual norms and saw themselves married with children. This observation was gender specific to women. Gay males did not have difficulty in identifying their sexuality. Further research is needed to explore the gender differences in identity development.

My lens as an African American heterosexual female shaped what I saw and labeled as important. The analysis of data and observations in this study has implications for policy and practice and recommendations for future research.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Every student has the right to learn and thrive in an environment free from discrimination, harassment and fear. To advocate for change within the academic community, it is important to know the contextual meaning of these students' experiences and the influences on their identity development, psychological functioning, and overall academic success. This study sought to gain information that may assist in forging change that will increase retention and promote positive holistic development of African American GLB students.

It is safe to assume that for African American gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals, race, gender and sexuality are all systemically related, with equal impact on each other. As African American GLB students struggle to integrate multiple marginalized identities, it is crucial for college communities to understand the factors that contribute to their identity development process. Whether Historically Black, predominantly White, religiously affiliated or secular, institutions must be sensitive to the adjustment and psychological functioning of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

It has only been recently the colleges have provided services for ethnic and sexual minorities; however these services are rarely integrated. "Students often are forced to choose where to go on the basis of which part of their identity needs servicing or support" (Wall & Washington, 1991, p.68). Higher education administrators must enhance services that foster positive collegiate experiences and facilitate opportunities for healthy identity integration. Regardless of the type, colleges must help create supportive communities that meet the needs of this population. As the data indicate social interactions fostered positive identity development and self-worth. Homophobia and racism hinder colleges from realizing the invisibility of certain groups and students become susceptible to falling between the cracks. With the help of faculty and staff, students can become connected to each other as well as other parts of the campus community. As the data indicated students feel safe to explore their identities in supportive environments; and the implementation of cultural events specific to the population, may initiate a dialogue among students that will increase awareness and encourage students to become more open with themselves and others.

While the findings of the study represent a small scope of students, it does bring to light some of the developmental challenges of this population. The model provides practitioners with a framework of the developmental process and the interplay of race and sexuality. Faculty, staff and administration must continue to educate themselves on the developmental processes of this population. While every student is confronted with development challenges, the additional hardships of discrimination, homophobia and assault, make identity formation more difficult. It should be the goal of the institution to create safe and equitable environments that promote healthy functioning and positive identity formation.

Limitations

As with most qualitative studies, generalizability was a limitation of the study. The findings of this study must be comprehended in relation to the limitations of small sample size and the specificity of location. These factors decreased the external validity of the findings. The data represent these students at this specific institution. The findings and model would look different if students attended a predominantly White university or a secular institution.

The sampling methods also posed a limitation of the study, the participants were self-identified and some recruited by other students in the study. The interrelationships between the students compromised the diversity of the sample as it is assumed that most of the students interacted with each other in some capacity. This may have also contributed to the small number of males in the study. While it was the intent of the researcher to obtain a diverse sample with an even distribution of males and females, the small enrollment,

institutional culture and homophobia within the African American community created a challenge in recruiting a diverse sample.

The use of the researcher as the instrument was another limitation of the study. As a African American heterosexual female researcher, the manner in which meaning and understanding were extracted and analyzed was directly influenced by the researcher's background. The heterosexist bias of the researcher hindered the full understanding of issues related to homosexuality and bisexuality. The racial similarities between the participants and the researcher were both a strength and a limitation. The commonality of being African American may have contributed to lack of detail of their racial identity responses. Students may have felt it was unnecessary to divulge lengthy answers because of the race of the researcher. Her sexual orientation and gender at times also created a barrier between the participants and the researcher. One student refused to describe his sexual identity experiences because he felt the researcher would never understand as a heterosexual female. Despite attempts to establish rapport and trust, the researchers background served as a limitation to the study. Regardless of the limitations, the research protocol and methodology maintained the integrity of qualitative research, and assured the value of the research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitations of the research and the paucity of identity development literature there is a need for additional research.

Identity theories have been instrumental in educational research (Montgomery, 2004). However these theories have been remiss in looking at the multidimensional influence of identity development. A replication of this study should occur at other college

campuses, HBCUs, PWIs, religiously affiliated and secular institutions. With increased replication a more comprehensive multidimensional model can be developed that incorporates the intersection of racial and sexual identity.

This study included both gay, lesbian and bisexual women and men, however research is needed that examines the specific developmental processes with regards to sexual orientation and gender. The influence of gender differences in past research studies indicates the need for future research. Educators should be aware of developmental issues specific to gay males, lesbians, bisexual males and females, to ensure that programs, and services meet their needs.

While the present study briefly examined identity development during college, a more detailed examination of identity development between freshman and senior years would add to the developmental literature and help faculty, staff and administration assess the impact of collegiate environment on African American GLB students.

A majority of studies that focus on college students extend until graduation. Longitudinal studies are needed to fully grasp the changes in development once students have matriculated. Age, maturity and context all influence identity development. As researchers become more aware of developmental changes after graduation, colleges can better prepare students for the future. Overall this study has touched the tip of the iceberg, and more research is needed to explore culturally-sensitive models related to this population. To develop policies and practices that better serve these students, institutions must be able to assess the needs of this marginalized population.

While the literature has been scant, research has indicated African American GLB students a forced to develop marginalized identities in an oppressive society. As a result

these students are more susceptible to attrition and even worse, suicide. College is the time for exploration and development, academically, personally, socially and spiritually. It is imperative that all students have the tools and education to explore their identities in a safe and welcoming environment.

One of the purposes of this study was to provide an opportunity to hear the voices of students that have long been excluded and silenced within academia and society. The students in this study offered insight on the identity construction and integration of race and sexual orientation. Similar to other identity development studies, their perspectives suggested the influence of other voices outside of themselves such as family, society, college and peers (Jones, 1997). Without this insight, colleges, communities and society would continue to be uninformed of the needs of these students. Hopefully their voices will be a catalyst to enact necessary changes on campuses, in society and within the African American and gay communities.

Appendix A
First Interview Protocol and Questions

Preparation

As I mentioned on the phone, this study is interested in looking at the identity development of African American GLB students at a religiously affiliated HBCU. But before we begin the interview questions, I wanted to tell you how I became interested in this topic. During my tenure at HT, I became very close to students that were struggling with sexual identity and finding a place to be accepted. I became curious in how students develop dual identities and how they define their race and sexuality. I am very interested in hearing your story. I want to provide an opportunity for your voice to be heard. While responses may be shared, your identity will be protected under a pseudonym, so please be as open and candid with your responses. This study will include two interviews of about an hour in length. However do not be concerned with the time; I am more concerned with your story than the time frame. If you need to leave at anytime please feel free to do so. On that note I want to reiterate that you may withdraw from the study at anytime. At then end of the second interview, you will receive a $15 gift certificate to the bookstore as a token of my appreciation for you participation. Do you have any questions before we begin?... Have I addressed all of your questions?

Racial Identity Development Questions

1. How would you identify/label your race?
2. What does it mean to you to be African American/Black?
3. Can you tell me about some of your memories growing up, where you first became aware of your race?
4. What were your thoughts and feelings about being African American before you came to college? Why?
5. What experiences/interactions (i.e., Family, friends, peers…etc.) have influenced how you view your racial identity prior to coming to college?

Identity development Interview Questions

6. How would you identify your sexual orientation?
7. What does it mean to you to be gay/lesbian/bisexual?
8. Looking back at your life, when did you begin to realize that you might be gay, lesbian or bisexual? (Hofman, 2004). Please describe that process? What did you feel?
9. Can you remember a specific time, place, or event when you first told someone else or a group of individuals that you were gay, lesbian or bisexual? (Hofman, 2004) How did you feel?

10. What experiences/interactions (i.e., Family, friends, peers…etc.) influenced how you view your sexual identity prior to coming to college?
11. How *out* do you currently feel? (Hofman, 2004) Why do you feel that way?

Conclusion

If you are willing to continue your participation in this study, I will be contacting you for a second interview. Before the second interview, I will be sending a copy of the interview transcript via e-mail for you to look over. At the beginning of the second interview, which should occur within four weeks, we can go over any discrepancies of changes in the data. In the second interview, I want to hear about your experiences as a GLB student on campus. Our second interview should be around an hour as well. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email or telephone.

Appendix B
Second Interview Protocol and Questions

Preparation

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me again. Since our last meeting, I assume you have taken the time to look over the first interview transcript. If you have any comments or questions we can discuss them at this time. Today's interview will focus on your experiences on campus, and your feelings about the challenges facing African American GLBT students today. We will be meeting for about one hour, but do not be concerned with the time. However, if you need to leave at any time, let me know.

I am more concerned that you fully explore the interview questions than the time. So please feel free to answer as in much detail you feel as necessary. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Racial Identity Development

1. How has your view of your racial identity changed while in college?
2. Have your conceptions of race changed since coming to college?
3. How have your experiences/interactions on campus (i.e. Faculty, friends, peers…etc.) influenced your racial identity development?
4. Do you feel your racial identity is supported on campus? Why or why not?, Where else do you feel supported as an African American?

Identity Development In College

1. Are you *out* on campus? (Why or why not?)
2. How has your view of your sexual identity changed since coming to college?
3. Please describe some of your experiences on campus that have occurred a result of being a GLBT student. How have they influenced your sexual identity development?
4. Do you feel your sexual identity is supported on campus? Why or Why not?, If not where do you get support as a gay/lesbian/bisexual individual?

Dual Identity Integration

1. What does it mean for you to be an African American gay/bisexual/lesbian individual?
2. How has your race influenced your sexual identity?
3. How has your sexual orientation influenced your racial identity?
5. What are your challenges in being an African American GLB? What are the challenges in being an African American GLB at this institution?
6. Do you feel supported as both AA and GLB? If so, where does the support come from?
7. Where and when do you experience the most negative experiences as an AA GLB?
8. Where and when do you experience the most positive experiences as an AA GLB?

Conclusion

Thank you for your time and for participating in the interview process. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to give you this gift certificate to the UT Co-op. Your story will be a great help in understanding the identity development of African American GLB students at a religiously affiliated HBCU. Similar to the first interview I will send you a copy of the second interview transcript via e-mail. After two weeks, I will contact you to discuss any comments or questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me before then with your comments or concerns. During data analysis, I may send you a description of my findings from your experiences to get your feedback about the findings. I thank you for your time and willingness to be a part of this study.

Appendix C
Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain background information about the participants. If you do not comfortable answering a question, please feel free to leave it blank.

1.Name:

2.Age:

3.Gender:

4.Major:

5.Classification:

6.Religious Affiliation (if any):

7.Extracurricular Activities/Organizations:

8.Live on/off campus:

9.Family Household Income: (Please circle one)

$0-19,999

$20,000- 49,999

$50,000 +

10. Would you describe yourself as primarily in the closet or out of the closet?

11. Using a 1-7 scale, with 1 being completely homosexual and 7 being completely heterosexual, where would you place yourself?

Homosexual 1----2----3----4---5----6----7 Heterosexual

Email Address:_____

Appendix D
Research Request Letter

August 25, 2005

[Institution address inserted here]

Dear [deleted],

SUBJECT: DOCTORAL RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin. For my dissertation I am interested in listening to the stories of racial and sexual identity development of African American gay, lesbian, and bisexual students at a religiously affiliated Historically Black institution. African American gay students, religiously affiliated institutions and HBCUs have been largely ignored in the research. This study would allow all three aspects to be included into GLBT literature. During my tenure at [deleted], I counseled several gay students that have struggled with their racial and sexual identity. From these sessions, I became interested in the integration of racial and sexual identity development. In order to conduct this research, I am in need of your help.

Specifically I seek to conduct two interviews with gay, lesbian and bisexual college students at [deleted] who are both "out" and in the closet. These students will be 18 years to 25 years in age, and can be enrolled full-time or part-time. In addition they must self-identify as one of the three sexual orientations. With your permission I wish to recruit participants with flyers in designated areas that introduce the study, participation requirements, confidentiality and anonymity information, and monetary compensation. Students who complete both interviews will be given a $15 gift certificate for the campus bookstore.

Once a potential participant has contacted me I will set-up an appointment to meet with them where we can discuss the research I'm conducting, answer any questions they may have, and set-up a time and place for the first interview. Both interviews will be around 60 minutes and I will ask questions related to their identity development and their experiences on campus. Each interview will be audiotaped and transcribed by myself and another individual not affiliated with institution. Participation in this research is voluntary and any participant can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The transcriber (typist) and I will listen to the tape. The interview transcriptions will be read by the researcher, transcriber, members of the dissertation committee, and the research participant. After completion of the study, all data will be shredded and properly destroyed.

To protect participants' identities I will use pseudonyms in the write-up to keep their information as anonymous and confidential as possible. The institution will also be protected by changing identifying characteristics in the write up as well. The dissertation committee members and the researcher will be the only individuals that are aware of the research site. If there are other ways you wish to ensure the institution and participants are protected, please feel free to let me know.

My dissertation committee has approved the research study, and the Institutional Review Board is in process waiting for approval from the research site. This research is very important to the academic community, GLBT community and African American community. I would appreciate the opportunity to conduct research at your institution. Thank you for your consideration and time. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at [deleted] or lchill_77@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

LaToya Hill
Doctoral student
University of Texas at Austin

Appendix E
Participation Flyer

Needed For Research Study:

African American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual College Students

I am doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin interested in the racial and sexual identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual college students at a religiously affiliated, Historically Black institution. The study will consist of two one-hour interviews that will be audiotaped and transcribed. The interviews will occur at a location convenient for both the participant and the researcher. At the completion of the second interview, students will receive a **$15 gift certificate** to the UT Co-op.

Participation Requirements

1) Must be self- identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual
2) Must self-identify as African American
3) Must be at least 18 years of age or older
4) Must be enrolled full-time or part- time (3 credit hours or more) at [deleted]

Participation is voluntary and students may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. Participant information will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you or someone you know meets the criteria, and is interested in the study, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Contact LaToya Hill at [deleted] or email at lchill_77@yahoo.com

Be a part of research that can make a difference!

Appendix F
Contact Summary Sheet

Participant:_____
Date:_____
Contact Type:_____
Contact Date:_____

1. What are the main issues and themes that emerged from this session?

2. Anything that struck me as salient, illuminating or odd from this session?

3. What follow up questions do I have to ask at the next contact?

4. What are my overall feelings and thoughts about the interview session?

Appendix G
Informed Consent Form

IRB#
_____

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study: The Experiences and Identity Development of African-American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual students at a Religiously Affiliated Historically Black University.

Principal Investigator(s) (include faculty sponsor), UT affiliation, and Telephone Number(s):
Marilyn Kameen, Senior Associate Dean, EDD, 471-7255 LaToya Hill- 773-9191, doctoral student in Educational Administration

Funding source: Not applicable

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore the racial and sexual identity development of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students at a religiously-affiliated Historically Black university. Interviews will be conducted with 15- 20 part-time and full-time college students, that identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?
If you choose to take part in this research study, you will be interviewed twice by the principal investigator. Each interview will be approximately one-hour in length and will take place in a location that is convenient for you and the investigator. You will be interviewed twice over a two month period. During the research project you will confer with principal investigator about the interview process, and the transcripts of your responses.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?
As a result in participation in this study psychological or emotional issues may arise from discussing your experiences as a gay, lesbian or bisexual student on campus. A list of campus and community resources will be provided in case of psychological distress. In addition to psychological distress, the loss of confidentiality is another potential risk. However the Principal Investigator will minimize this potential risk, by disguising any identifying characteristics. If you do encounter any psychological or emotional discomfort or wish to discuss the information above (or any other risks you may experience), you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?
Participants will be able to express their experiences, issues, and concerns as a GLB student in a safe and supportive environment. Participants may also benefit by the knowing that they will be informing educational researchers of the needs of African American gay, lesbian and bisexual students.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?
There will be no cost to participate in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?
There is a monetary benefit to this study. As an incentive, upon completion of the second interview, participants will receive a $15 gift certificate to the UT Co-op.

What if you are injured because of the study?
No medical treatment will be provided or available in case of injury as a result of participation in this study.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin or [name of college inserted here on form].

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should I call if I have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: LaToya Hill at (512)773-9191. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact Lisa I. Lieden, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 471-8604. You may also contact the Office of Research Compliance and Support at (512) 471-8871.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored, then the sponsor also has the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

In addition it is important to note (a) that the interviews or sessions will be audiotaped; (b) that the cassettes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them; (c) that they will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home); (d) that they will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates; and (e) that they will be retained for 3 years for possible future analysis, after which they will be discarded appropriately.

We may wish to present some of the tapes from this study at scientific conventions or as demonstrations in classrooms. Please sign below if you are willing to allow us to do so with the tape of your performance.

"I hereby give permission for the video (audio) tape made for this research study to be also used for educational purposes."

Signature_____Date:_____
____

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this *study*?
Beyond publishing and educational purposes the researchers will not benefit from your participation in this study?

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent **Date**

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name of Subject **Date**

Signature of Subject **Date**

Signature of Principal Investigator **Date**

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